


Spacious Body

EXPLORATIONS IN SOMATIC ONTOLOGY

Jeffrey Maitland

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Jeffrey Maitland



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Spacious Body: Explorations in Somatic Ontology

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To Sekiun who planted a seed

To Eido Roshi who nourished it

To Sasaki Roshi who hacked it to pieces

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Preface

JEFFREY MAITLAND SEEKS to accomplish what is difficult. He wants to capture our experience of “being”-made-flesh, hold it gently in his hands for a moment, like a butterfly, and examine it long enough to gain precious understanding, but without damaging it in the process. This differs from the traditional “scientific collector” whose knowledge is displayed as mounted specimens framed under glass, neatly categorized according to genus and species, beautiful but quite dead.

We face this problem: our way of gaining knowledge often kills the very thing we seek to know. This is nowhere more apparent than in the study of our own experience. So often certainty is purchased at the price of reducing human experience to elements that are no longer living and vital. We end up certain of dead things.

We have learned much about our world by reducing it to its constituent parts. But in the process, we have separated ourselves from our world and, most tragically, from our own bodies as part of that world. As a consequence, we may know what we are made of, but we do not know who we are. We are quite literally knowledgeable, yet out of touch; and we suffer from being out of touch. Our preconceptions about the nature of things, of which we are so proud, exclude an immediacy of knowing that would put us in more intimate contact with ourselves. Without this sensory intimacy of our experience we are vulnerable to our own rationalizations and to those of others. We are too easily manipulated or persuaded, often against our own self-interest.

Restoring this sensory knowing of ourselves requires new

approaches. Jeffrey Maitland brings his knowledge and personal experience of Buddhism, phenomenology, alchemy, psychoanalysis, and the bodywork system of Rolfing to bear in forging concepts adequate to an understanding of embodied experience. Real body feeling and energy is the necessary condition for conscious orientation in the world. Without this physical experience we are at a loss. The roots of our awareness in bodily sensations provide a profound way of knowing ourselves and the world. This is a precondition for a sense of certainty and peace. The immediacy of inner, sensory knowing is also an important alternative to culturally dominant models of “objective” knowledge, which have proved ineffectual in teaching us how to heal ourselves.

The passage into this inner immediacy occurs by way of transformation, which is different from mere change and is similar to healing. We may want it, but we cannot will it. Transformation is the other aspect of Jeffrey Maitland’s inquiry in this book. He carefully leads us through a discussion of will and intention in order to demonstrate that only by “allowing what is to show itself” can we ever hope to understand something important about our butterfly without damaging it.

Allowing becomes for Maitland both a way of knowing and a way of transformation. All the paradoxes of Zen Buddhism are at play here and we glimpse through his eyes, or perhaps through his belly, the sometimes painful process of “letting go” that is at the heart of all transformation. For a culture intoxicated with the power of will, there is in these pages a refreshing critique of accustomed ways of being and acting.

To write of the nature of being, of bodily experience, is difficult. The abstractions of being, temporal, and spatial presence draw language out of its daily context and often leave us longing for specifics. But if we stay with it, Maitland’s patient language eventually leads us deeper into our own experience and toward our own orientation in the world—which is the only place worth going.

Jeffrey Maitland is a colleague of mine as a practicing Rolfer

Preface

and Instructor for the Rolf Institute. His training as a philosopher and his love of wisdom have helped equip him for the task that Rolfing and the field of somatics, or “bodywork,” poses. This is to create a conceptual framework adequate to the experience that lies at the heart of bodily transformation. *Spacious Body* is a welcome contribution to that task.

Michael J. Salveson
Instructor, Rolf Institute
Berkeley, California
June 1995

Introduction

WE ARE ALL BORN and we all die. Between birth and death, we bodily go back and forth from suffering to pleasure, confusion to clarity, isolation to fellowship, conflict to resolution, and a host of other oppositions. Not knowing how near our freedom and truth are to us we seek it everywhere but where bodily we always already are. But *who* is it in this dance of life and death who suffers and rejoices? Prior to the subjective and the objective worlds, what is *that* from which they arise and from which they are never apart?

Fascinated and driven by the fundamental questions of human life, I took my first philosophy course when I was eighteen. By the time I had become a professor of philosophy nine years later, however, I realized I would never find the answers to life's fundamental questions through an academic approach to philosophy. Without warning, the circumstances of my life rearranged themselves and in despair I began practicing Zen meditation with my first teacher. Three years later, I found my second Zen teacher and my eyes opened for the first time. With painful clarity, I experienced how empty and devoid of life the academic pursuit of philosophy in a modern university had become. At the same time, I realized that true philosophy is not just another pursuit of conceptual thought, but a specific kind of practice and investigation into the spacious heart of existence. True philosophy is a wisdom-practice that aims at the most fundamental and complete transformation of the whole person, body and all.

My experience is that transformation, at whatever level it occurs, from psychological transformation to experiences of creativity to

spiritual illumination, is always a bodily event. To many people this may sound strange. The evolution of over 2,000 years of Western thought has given birth to a conceptual framework that represents and objectifies reality as a collection of various kinds of objects interacting causally and mechanically. It is small wonder, then, that without a moment's thought most of us mistakenly assume that the self or spirit is a wholly distinct and separate from the body and that the body is but a mere physical thing, or worse, "a soft machine." Given this framework, we cannot help but see the body as irrelevant and perhaps even a hindrance to transformation. In my experience I have discovered that the body is not a mere thing among the other things of the objective world, and it is not a soft machine. Rather, our human self is a psychospacial, psychotemporal orientation, and so the transformation of the whole being, at whatever level it occurs, is always a bodily event.

Every experience seeks a language in which to show itself. Since the concepts of our cultural heritage are precisely the ones most unsuited for displaying the nature of life, the nature of the human body-self, and the nature of transformation, another kind of language is required. My sources and influences are many, but throughout this book I have tried to find a way of speaking that is true to life as we live it and true to the experience of transformation.

My experiences with Zen forced me to find a language and way of thinking that transcended as much as possible the cultural biases of both Eastern and Western thought. Despite the problematic limitations of Nietzsche's philosophy, I was attracted to his experiments in thinking and his radical but unsuccessful attempt to extricate human existence from the metaphysics of dis-ease. I also found a home in the philosophical method of phenomenology. Phenomenology is not a system of doctrines, but the disciplined attempt to describe experience without imposing on what is described any inappropriate conceptual framework.

Anyone familiar with the odyssey of Heidegger's thinking, from his early phenomenological investigations to later works that broke

away from existentialism and phenomenology, will recognize the profound influence his work has had on me. Much of Chapter Six, for example, is dependent on Heidegger's explorations of time and being. Nevertheless, for many reasons I am not a disciple of Heidegger. He never gave the human body its rightful place in his philosophy and I could never embrace his attempt to make time more fundamental than space and being.

Seven years after I began Zen practice and had worked out the major lines of thought represented in this book, I found my third Zen teacher and discovered Rolfing. Originally called Structural Integration by its creator, Dr. Ida P. Rolf, Rolfing is a revolutionary theory and technique for releasing, ordering, and aligning the human body in gravity. As far as I know, Rolfing is the only manipulative theory and practice, East or West, that has squarely faced and focused all its attention on the unique difficulties involved in our ongoing struggle to become upright. It is the only system I know that tries to balance not just the spine or some other system of the body, but to organize the whole body in the gravitational field.

For many people, the results of Rolfing can be astonishing and profound. Reordering a person's structure through Rolfing can correct bad backs and necks, put arches in flat feet, and dramatically improve the performance of athletes and dancers. It can fundamentally alter the shape and structure of our body so that we stand taller and are more at ease in the limitations of human form and gravity. It can sometimes produce profound psychological and emotional transformations and, in rare cases, it opens people spiritually.

I was so impressed with what Rolfing did for me that I became a Rolfer and resigned from a tenured position at Purdue University in order to pursue a full-time Rolfing practice. Rolfing released me from a debilitating back problem from which I had suffered for years. To my great delight and surprise, it also opened me in ways I thought were only possible through meditation. A few years later, I was invited to train to become a Rolfing instructor. Presently,

as a Rolfing instructor I also serve as Faculty Chairman and Director of Academic Affairs for the International Rolf Institute.

Rolfing achieves its remarkable results by manipulating a form of connective tissue called fascia. Fascia surrounds and penetrates all structures of the body, and in conjunction with the bones and muscles it is largely responsible for the unique form and space of each person's body. Fascia is tough but elastic; it responds to appropriate mechanical pressure by softening and lengthening. A Rolfing session looks to an observer like a form of body sculpting—using fingers, knuckles, and elbows to ease and lengthen fascial strain patterns, the Rolfer reshapes and reorders the whole body from head to toes with the aim of better organizing it in gravity.

Rolfing has played and continues to play a major role in a profound revolution for which our culture began preparing over a century ago. This revolution concerns the very essence of what means to be human and works against the denial of the body and of earthly existence that has dominated two millennia of Western thought and philosophy. It began with the advent of existentialism, phenomenology, and the influx of Oriental philosophies and practices. The arrival of these new sources of insight and wisdom stimulated the rediscovery of the holistic paradigm in our own Judeo-Christian and ancient traditions. The revolution also simultaneously reawakened the age-old quest for the transformation and spiritual illumination of the body which is at the mystical heart of every religion. The transformation of body was called “metasomatosi” by the alchemists; practices devoted to it are found in every culture throughout the world, such as *chi gong*, Zen meditation, Hindu and Buddhist tantra, yoga, the spiritual exercises created by Saint Ignatius, and the practice of “Circulating the Lights” developed by the medieval alchemists.

This revolution is not simply about the transformation of consciousness. It is about something much more fundamental—the recovery of our bodies, our embodied-belonging-together-on-the-earth.

The 1980s witnessed one undeveloped fruit of this revolution, in the spectacular blooming, buzzing, confusion and worldwide proliferation of alternative schools and techniques of bodywork and movement education. From myofascial release to deep tissue and deep muscle therapies, many of these schools and techniques, in one way or another, imitate and rest upon Dr. Rolf's pioneering work. Although too numerous to list here, very few of these schools and techniques ever give Dr. Rolf credit for what they have taken and gained from her work. Most if not all never grasped the heart and principles of Dr. Rolf's system for structurally and functionally integrating the body in gravity.

Many schools describe what they do as "deep tissue therapy," and as a result, many people now refer to Rolfing as deep tissue therapy. But there is a certain absurdity about referring to Rolfing in this way. After all, the notion of "deep" tissue implies the notion of "surface" tissue. Dr. Rolf always emphasized the importance of knowing what "layer" in the body you are working with, and she also insisted on a distinction between what she called the "core" (which is not necessarily deep tissue) and the "sleeve." So describing a form of bodywork as deep tissue work sets the practitioner up to work on the deep tissue at the expense of the surface tissues. For Dr. Rolf and her students this approach constitutes one sure way to unbalance the body. Because of the theoretical confusions underlying the many forms of bodywork throughout the world, and because Rolfers do not massage or work *on* bodies, Rolfing should not be considered a form of bodywork. Rolfing is better understood as a form of wholistic, integrative somatic education and manipulation that deals with the whole person in relation to gravity.

Because of the influence of what has come to be called myofascial release technique, many people also mistakenly consider Rolfing to be just another a form of this practice. The phrase "myofascial release" was originally coined by osteopathic physician Dr. Robert Ward to describe his creative contribution to soft tissue manipulation. The phrase was picked up and popularized by physical ther-

apists. Physical therapists and other professionals began taking classes in a form of soft tissue manipulation which simply combined technique and theory from Rolfing and osteopathy without giving any credit to its originators. As a result, most people know next to nothing about the nature of this pioneering work and know only of the jejune popularized version of myofascial release. With little or no understanding of the global organization and functioning of the whole body in gravity, the popularized version of myofascial release, like most forms of traditional manipulation, is simply a collection of techniques designed to release various body parts, symptom by symptom. Many of the techniques that have been appropriated from Rolfing are employed without the specificity and whole-body effect for which they were intended. They have been added to the traditional collection of symptomatic treatment techniques without any understanding of how to organize the body in gravity or how to prevent strain from showing up in other areas of the body once it has been manipulated.

Metaphorically, Rolfing attempts to “transform the sky, not push the stars.” Any manipulative system that symptomatically treats the body by adjusting bones back into place or by manipulating tight fascia is a “star” model of manipulation. Such models of physical therapy and myofascial release often provide people with effective and beneficial help. But Rolfing is a model of manipulation and somatic education which has the potential not only to release the body from its aches and pains but to transform the whole person. The “sky” that Rolfing works with is the myofascial system of the body in its relationship to gravity. By transforming the fascial sky and organizing the whole body in gravity, the various “stars” of the body not only find their appropriate place, but also function better. Rolfing can and does release the body from its aches and pains and restrictions. Symptoms tend to disappear, not because the body has been manipulated symptomatically and piecemeal, but because the *whole person* has been engaged and educated to uncover his or her original place of dwelling bodily on the earth.

Any sky model of manipulation is a wholistic or integrative system. Rolfing is clearly a wholistic system of myofascial manipulation and movement education. Osteopathy as it was originally conceived by its creator and founder, Dr. Still, is also a wholistic system. Myofascial release as it is practiced and taught in the popularized versions, however, is not a wholistic system of manipulation. While only paying lip service to the wholistic paradigm, it remains just a loose collection of effective techniques designed to treat local dysfunctions symptomatically.

The more I pursued the wholistic framework of Rolfing, the more I understood the bodily dimension of any form of transformation. What I had experienced preconceptually from Zen and my first Rolfing experiences began to take on greater conceptual clarity. I realized that some of the key concepts that Dr. Rolf had developed (such as the core and the sleeve) were bodily versions of concepts I had developed to describe the experience of creative freedom.

As a Rolfer working with bodies, I was awed to discover that with my hands I could touch the mysteries at the heart of human existence. The conflicts in our life, I discovered, are conflicts in our bodies. In a way that is difficult to describe in words, human flesh is spiritualized matter. Through Rolfing I gained a deeper and clearer understanding of a truth of Zen: transformation at any level of our being always demands, always *is*, a transformation of the body. I realized that in some cases and under certain circumstances, especially when a person has made the necessary spiritual preparations, Rolfing has the potential to occasion what the alchemists called metasomatosis—the spiritual transformation of the body.

Rolfing can be defined as the philosophy, art (or craft), and science of structurally and functionally integrating the human body in space-time and gravity. Dr. Rolf has already articulated Rolfing in the language of anatomy and science in her book, *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures*. A number of other theoreticians have continued to work and publish in the science of Rolfing. For a number of years, I have been publishing articles attempting to

clarify the domain and principles of wholism and the art of Rolfing. But in this book, I decided to emphasize the philosophical dimensions of Rolfing as a way to illuminate the bodily nature of transformation.

Since Dr. Rolf's death in 1979, the philosophy, science, and art of Rolfing has continued to evolve significantly and profoundly. Our techniques have become much more gentle and precise, and, as a result, Rolfing has become far more effective in its ability to reposition bony segments as well as organize the whole body in gravity. Clear, comprehensive local and global taxonomies of structure and function have been discovered for recognizing when a body is or is not approaching structural and functional order.

Dr. Rolf originally taught Rolfing by means of a formulistically conceived ten-session framework, which she characteristically called the "recipe." Unfortunately, the principles of Rolfing were never clearly or properly stated within the recipe. Some of Dr. Rolf's first teachers unwittingly and unconsciously fossilized the recipe in such a way that it blurred important distinctions between principles, strategies, tactics, techniques, goals of the work, and formulistic protocols of working. In the place of any clear understanding of principles, Dr. Rolf's infatuation with a template of the "Ideal Body" was enshrined as a kind of Platonic goal of every Rolfing series. Instead of investigating more thoroughly the areas where Dr. Rolf's theories and observations broke down, some of the first teachers unknowingly helped to turn Rolfing into an even more dogmatic system by mixing in bits and pieces of undigested metaphysics and vapid spiritual notions. As a result, many Rolfers learned the art by becoming schooled in a kind of magical thinking which unfortunately took the place of rigorous thought and empirical observation. Instead of being taught how to engage in and evolve Dr. Rolf's original line of inquiry, too many Rolfers were molded into true believers and keepers of the faith. As a result, Rolfing theory and practice remained mired in dogmatism, formulism, and an ill-conceived sophomoric metaphysics.

For too many years after Dr. Rolf's death, the development of what she called Advanced Rolfing (any Rolfing performed after the original ten-session series) was inappropriately conceived around yet another formulistic recipe. Other of Dr. Rolf's first teachers became increasingly more dissatisfied with the formulistic protocols of Rolfing, and struggled to find ways of working that were more attentive to the obvious individual differences among clients. I wrote a series of articles on the nature of the principles of intervention. Jan Sultan and Michael Salveson, two of Dr. Rolf's first teachers, taught a number of Advanced Classes together in which they explored teaching an empirically-based non-formulaic Rolfing coupled with an attempt to formulate the principles of Rolfing.

In 1991, Jan Sultan and I worked together on articulating the principles of Rolfing manipulation and movement education while teaching an Advanced Rolfing class. For almost a decade, Sultan had been working toward a non-formulistic form of Rolfing and had organized his observations of human structure and function into a brilliant typology of body structures. Together, he and I finally managed to formulate a preliminary statement of the principles of Rolfing. We then tried to teach the work of Rolfing without dependence on formulistic recipes and protocols. We brought our results to the Rolfing faculty for examination and critical dialogue and then published an article on the principles of Rolfing.¹ Since the publication of the first statement of principles, we have continued to refine our concepts and teach the work of Rolfing according to principles rather than formulistic protocols. Salveson and I taught an Advanced Class together during which time he added important refinements to the principles. Articulating the principles along with discovering comprehensive taxonomies of normal structure and function has finally allowed Rolfing to free itself from formulaic ways of working and the mistaken Platonic notion of an Ideal Body.

There is also a growing body of research which supports many of the claims of Rolfing. But the philosophical implications of

Rolfing have not yet been given their due in print. Because of the unprecedented way in which Dr. Rolf's work opens up a whole new vista for understanding the somatic nature of human experience, I discuss the Rolfing perspective throughout this book. In a sense, my Rolfing classes and practice have become my phenomenological laboratory. However, even though Rolfing plays a significant role in my discussion throughout this book, with the greatest detail occurring in Chapter Five, ultimately this book is not simply about Rolfing. It is a discursive philosophical strategy and excursion into what I have come to call somatic ontology.

The Greek word *soma* refers not to our body as we *think* about it or objectify it in science, but first and foremost to our body as we *live* it. Unlike the English word "body," which can refer to either a living or dead body, *soma* refers only to the living body. Ontology is the branch of metaphysics which asks "What is the nature and meaning of being?" or more simply, "What is being?" Although thousands of treatises on metaphysics have been written, ontology is not essentially a set of doctrines or theories about the nature of being. The question "What is being?" is much more a wisdom-demanding question than one requiring knowledge. It is much more like a Zen *koan* than a request for a verbal conceptual articulation. Fundamentally, the answer to the question, "What is being?" is the transformation of the person (body and all) who asks the question.

Somatic ontology asks the question of being by asking, "What is the bodily being of human being?" Somatic ontology is the inquiry into the nature of being through an investigation of our bodily being. Every question about who and what we are, from the most mundane to our most profound spiritual questions about the ultimate unnameable ground (which is no ground at all) of existence, always brings us back to our bodies, to where we always and already are. To understand completely and fully what it means to be a somatic being is to understand our freedom and place in all of *this*. Our human bodily being is the site in which being is revealed.

Questions about the ultimate are ultimately about our bodily being; the mysteries of spirit are the mysteries of our flesh. And these mysteries are revealed and embraced in the bodily transformation of the *one* who silently asks the question of being.

Spacious Body is essentially about the nature of transformation. There are many things this book is not. It is not a manual of Rolfing. And it is not a how-to manual of step-by-step formulas for changing your life; change and transformation are fundamentally different. Many books attempt to spell out formulistic protocols for changing your life. But there never have been nor will there ever be any recipes for transforming your life. There are no step-by-step protocols for creativity or transformation. Since transformation occurs only with the dissolution of the ego-driven, willful, calculating body-self, this book is my attempt at a description and investigation into the many levels of transformation as I presently understand them.

At every turn along the way, the path I take is always philosophical. Nevertheless, this book is not intended as a traditional philosophical treatise. For example, even though I am critical throughout of the way in which the so-called mind/body problem has been formulated and framed in the history of philosophy, I purposely do not engage in a sustained examination and critique of it. For the most part, this book unfolds not in the form of an argument or refutation, but in the form of a discursive philosophical strategy designed to allow for spacious thinking and reading which might on occasion open us to how we stand forth as embodied human beings in the midst of this unbounded spacious realm of all beings.

I offer this book, then, more as a phenomenological exploration in somatic ontology than a book devoted to the philosophy of Rolfing. It is fundamentally an exploration of the nature of transformation, creativity, freedom, and how we exist as human body-selves.

Like the process of transformation and life itself, this book does not always unfold in strictly linear and logical ways. There *is* a logic

at work from beginning to end, but it is circuitous and round, seeming to go in many directions at once, yet always returning to itself. To assist the reader, a glossary of terms has been provided.

All the people I discuss were, at one time or another, actual clients of mine. Marcie, Charles, and Janet, however, are composites of two or three actual clients. All names used here are fictional.

A final word of friendly caution: that this book is without faults is inconceivable. It has six chapters, but six times zero is still zero. Read with your whole body—or find zero—and you will see the long and the short of it, the right and wrong of it.

Notes

1. See “Definition and Principles of Rolfing,” co-authored with Jan Sultan, and “Rolfing as a Third Paradigm Approach,” in *Rolf Lines* (Spring, 1992), pp. 16–20 and pp. 46–49, respectively. See also the Bibliography, pp. 242–243, for a list of other articles I have written that are relevant to these issues.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Umpire of Chaos

CHUANG TZU TELLS THIS STORY:

There are two mists of chaos. The dark Southern mist is called heedless limitation and the light Northern mist is called sudden possibility. Now the Southern mist and the Northern mist were continually meeting in the spaciousness of Chaos. By allowing their sojourn, Chaos treated the two mists very well. They consulted together as to how they might repay his great kindness. "Human beings," they said, "have seven openings for seeing, hearing, eating, and breathing. But poor Chaos has no openings. Let's make him a few holes." So they made one opening a day. At the end of seven days Chaos died.¹

Chaos is Chuang Tzu's name for the formless, unnameable, groundless ground of being. It can manifest in a human being as shining unencumbered aliveness, luminous clarity, overflowing compassion, abundant humor, and free child-like spontaneity. Although Chaos need not die with the creation of the human body-self, in the mundanity of self-absorption and everydayness, the death of Chaos is a daily event.

There is an impeccable logic of wholeness and order to the way events emerge, unfold, and flow. This is not the logic invented by schoolteachers or mechanistic scientism. This is not the logic that

killed Chaos, but a living Logos, a way of being that participates with what is and allows it to be. To the person whose life and body are overly structured it seems a wild chaos. To the unhinged escapist abandoned to randomness, it seems a rigidly structured threat to his illusory freedom. Prior to the struggle between these two forms of self-possession, there is a spacious presence, standing there upright in itself, awake and at ease in the limitations of form and the fullness of time. When freed from conflict and fixation, that spacious presence is who we are. It is our spontaneous human freedom unencumbered by the limitations of form and time. I call it the spacious body. It can also be called the umpire of chaos.

The Buddha Was Not a Professor

The first time I saw the Colorado Rockies, I was an overweight, badly out-of-shape graduate student in philosophy. A friend took me on a hike to the top of a mountain. When we finally reached the top, my legs ached and my throat was on fire. After a short rest, we started down. To my surprise, my friend began running down the mountain. Being so unfit and unfamiliar with the terrain, I cautiously, or at least with what I thought was great care, placed one foot in front of the other, simultaneously probing each rock and pebble to make sure it would not slide. Instead of producing stability, this effort resulted in my repeatedly falling down. Finally, I gave up all caution and decided to follow my friend's example, and with complete abandon, I ran down the mountain. When a rock slipped under my foot I found myself leaping with perfect unpremeditated precision in exactly the right direction so as to never fall or break my stride. Without there being time for calculation, my body knew, with unerring certitude, exactly what to do. When I reached the foothills, my legs no longer ached and my throat and lungs were no longer on fire. I was exhilarated. A few years later, when I began jogging regularly, I experienced again this joyful abandonment which at the same time was perfect control.

In ways that I could not realize at the time, this experience of controlled abandonment was a precursor of things to come. Long before fitness became a fad, I pursued this elusive experience through jogging and then later through meditation. But American culture so thoroughly manifests a disruption of the original unity of body and spirit and is so obviously cut off from the well-springs of being, that like so many others, I easily lost my way. In time, however, I realized how easily the goal of fitness can degenerate into the common neurotic narcissistic domination of the body and feelings so evident today.

Even with the tremendous influx of alternative therapies, meditation techniques, and the rediscovered paradigms of wholism, our culture is still fixated in mechanistic theories of life and consciousness. Without realizing it, most people blindly adhere to Descartes' view of the body as a "soft machine." When we get ill, when we experience pain, that is, when the "machine" breaks down, we send it to a medical doctor thoroughly schooled in the mechanistically-based biomedical model. If the local medical mechanic cannot fix the trouble through surgery or chemical intervention, he ships the problem off to the nearest psychologist or psychiatrist who has also uncritically adopted the mechanistic perspective. Perhaps the problem is again treated with drugs, or perhaps an attempt is made to analyze the *mechanisms* of repression, to, at last, treat the mind, that ethereal ghost-like thing that somehow inhabits the body-machine. Unfortunately, after analyzing the mechanisms of the mind, the body is still in pain. Pursuing a wholistic approach is often more promising, but many times what is called "wholistic" is simply a disguised form of the same mechanistic perspective. So the misery and the pain persist. The modern world still remains puzzled by the medieval alchemists' claim that a spiritual truth lay hidden in the human body.

We live in an age in which everything appears to be settled, yet nobody is at rest. In part because scientism and modern technology bolster the illusion that we know how things stand, the most

unsettling questions are the ones we have forgotten how to ask or do not think are worth asking. But we do not know how things stand, at least with respect to fundamental questions about the nature and meaning of human life.

These fundamental questions are philosophical questions and are therefore quite unlike the ordinary questions of everyday life or those of scientific inquiry. For one thing, a philosophical question cannot be avoided. The very attempt to avoid asking philosophical questions represents an unspoken, unacknowledged commitment to a philosophical position. You can avoid history by not taking a history course or refusing to read historical works. But you cannot avoid philosophy by not taking a philosophy course or not reading philosophical works. To say, like so many people do these days, that philosophy is a worthless waste of time, is, like it or not, a philosophical claim.

True philosophical questions are also unlike ordinary questions in that they have a numinous quality like a Zen koan. And they are certainly not like most of the questions that are asked in college philosophy classes or discussed in most professional philosophical journals. A true philosophical question is like a dark mirror without edges. When it is answered we see something new about ourselves and live differently in relation to all of which we are a part. It is wrong to think that the intellect alone can answer such profound questions, and it is equally incorrect to think that the intellect must be somehow short-circuited in order to find the answers. The rational self is not inappropriate, it is just not completely adequate to the job. A true philosophical question is numinous, it is gripping and relentless in its ability to hold us in its demanding purview. And like a Zen koan, such a question cannot be answered until we have undergone a transformation.

Zen Mind, Zen Body

My first real philosophical question was given to me by my second Zen teacher. The question he wanted me to swallow in my meditation was, “What is *this*?” Like so many questions of this sort, no matter how skilled one might be in dialectics and logical reasoning, your initial response is likely to be somewhat unsettling as you find your verbal mind coming to an abrupt and confused halt, followed by an unpremeditated and disgruntled, “What?”

The word “this” functions in a most peculiar way in the question. It does not refer to something ordinary like, “What is this next to my book?” It asks “What is *this*?” and *this* includes me and you and everything and everyone, and our relationship, and anything else we can imagine. “What is *this*?” includes and is a bigger question than, “Who am I?” No matter how many books you read or lectures you attend on the nature of the “universe” or the “self” from whatever perspective you can imagine—philosophical, astrological, scientific, psychological and so on—you can never find an answer to the question “What is *this*?” unless you are transformed in the very asking of the question. No answer will be forthcoming until and unless the one who asks comes to light in the mirror of the question itself.

After “What is *this*?” became my question, I read Hakuin’s famous poem “The Song of Zazen” during a December retreat. The penultimate line of this great Zen poem is translated as “This very place is the lotus land of purity.” After reading this poem, I could not get this line out of my head. For three days I was on an emotional roller coaster. I experienced myself sinking slowly into the contraction of melancholy and depression. Then, when the contraction reached its limit, I would slowly expand into a joyful gratitude for the simple fact of being. Up and down I went. In the contractive phase, all of what I judged to be the negative aspects of my personality emerged and my body hurt in various places and felt leaden. In the expansive phase, all of what I thought of as the

positive aspects of my personality emerged and my body felt light, free of all pain and full of the most delicious golden energy. The entire time, as I was yinned and yanged through every level of my being, this line from “The Song of Zazen” relentlessly repeated itself in my mind, over and over again. Sometimes the whole line would come — “This very place is the lotus land of purity.” Sometimes only bits and pieces of the line would emerge, “This very place . . . this very place . . .” or “lotus land . . . lotus land of purity. . .”

On a gray morning of the third of December, as the cold polluted stench of New York City air embraced me, veils of illusion and layers of conflict quietly and completely dropped away from my entire body and mind. At that moment there was no self in place to record the passage of time. What was left over when the layers of my conflicted body-self dissolved was a spacious unencumbered body freely manifesting in luminous clarity. Sure enough, the “lotus land of purity” was indeed this very place, noise, stench, and all. Jesus must have had this place-of-no-boundaries in mind when he said that the kingdom of God was at hand. The lotus land of purity *is* at hand. Heaven is right here, right now, at this very place where you and I always and already are.

The line that follows “This very place is the lotus land of purity,” the last line of the poem, is: “This very body is the body of the Buddha.” Having “gone” to heaven and found out that it is *here*, I realized that heaven and hell are the same place; that this body, conceived of by Descartes as a soft machine, described by Plato as “the prisonhouse of the soul,” that religious teachers from East to West have denigrated in favor of false and illusory spiritual truths, this body that is me — this body is the body of the Buddha, the body of God. If you conceive of God as a personal creator existing apart from his creation, then the notion of the body as the body of God may be confusing. But God is nothing of the sort. God is simply this yielding openness which is neither identical to my body nor separate from it.

In the lotus land of purity, I knew why the Buddha said, “Things

are not as they seem; nor are they otherwise.” Everything was exactly as it has always been: the positions, arrangements, and connections between things were all unchanged. But the spaciousness of life within which and through which everything was *there* was so inexplicably and suddenly open and clear, so absolutely soft and utterly free of all conflict and fixation, that there was nothing but fullness and presence embracing itself everywhere.

Until that moment, it was as if I had been imprisoned by innumerable layers of long-forgotten barriers. These illusory boundaries had been part of me for so long and were so near to me that I had lost all awareness of how they constructed my innermost sense and definition of self, body, and world. Suddenly, and without drama, my invisible walls and definitions simply and completely fell away. I knew that Plato was perversely mistaken: the mind is not related to the body as the pilot is to the ship; the body is neither the prisonhouse nor the disfigurement of the soul.

In this spacious fullness there is no self and no will, yet there is a knowing which embraces the relationships of self-experience, body, and the totality of what is. As everything arises and falls away in pristine clarity and unencumbered openness, this will-less and selfless knowing embraces and is embraced by the fullness and spaciousness of the play of being and non-being. In the spacious radiance of this scintillating clarity, there is no opposition to the limitations of self, body, and world, and yet there is freedom from all psychological, cultural, and conceptual distortions. In unity there is only diversity; in diversity there is only unity. All in all: not one and not many—just a loving embrace embracing itself in unity *and* diversity.

In this exuberance that favors no thing over another, that prefers neither expansion nor contraction but embraces both, there is neither suffering nor the lack of it; no perfection nor its absence. This body of the Buddha, this very place where we always and already are, is perfect just as it is. It is not perfect because it finally measures up to some sort of Platonic ideal projected by the neurotic

needs of our philosophers and religious teachers, but perfect, whole, because all of *this* is simply manifesting itself perfectly as it is.

In this exuberance without preferences, the dualities of sickness and health, life and death, good and evil, pain and pleasure are simply transcended: not left behind, but simply transcended, and allowed in a loving embrace that includes everything. The dualities of human bodily existence are outstripped by an embrace that includes both sides of the duality and *is* the duality. This body, our human self, is not something that must be negated, denied, dominated, or suppressed; it is that by which we become fully who and what we are. As the philosophical alchemists put it, the *prima materia* is the *ultima materia*.

My bodily resurrection in heaven had in some ways been dimly prefigured in my experience of bodily abandonment in the Rockies—but only dimly. During my sojourn in the lotus land of purity, I recalled having experienced the same thing as a child. Before that moment, however, those memories had never been available to me. I was naturally quite carried away by all this for weeks afterwards.

From that moment on, I saw the world with new eyes. Everywhere I looked I saw how our lives display with complete obviousness our hopes, fears, miseries, and fantasies. Even the attempt to hide emotional pain from ourselves and others was palpably obvious. I felt how these patterns of denial were threaded tightly into the very fabric of our collective body-minds. I saw how these complicated patterns of denial and bodily strain were the same layers of barriers and boundaries that had fallen away from me. No longer was the idea of being “upright,” with all its spiritual and moral connotations, a mere metaphor to me.

When I heard someone say that the goal of the spiritual path was “to be in the world, but not of it,” I instantly knew I was not hearing about freedom but witnessing another more insidious form of spiritual arrogance and imprisonment. For long periods of time, reading spiritual and metaphysical books became nauseating. When I did so, I felt like a fool rummaging around in a pile of dead leaves

looking for life. Without wanting to, I saw and felt the depths of distress and self-deception in the bodies of many of the modern world's self-proclaimed self-help and spiritual teachers. I saw how their unconscious pretense of freedom, joy, and unconditional love infected their actions and writings and in turn led people further and further astray.

Although I could not have realized it at the time, this experience was by no means finished when this first flush of excitement and insight died down. Indeed, it was just the beginning of a process that would take years (and ultimately a lifetime) to integrate and complete. Such an opening into clarity is "finished" only when it is so thoroughly integrated into everyday life that no distinction between it and everyday life can be experienced.

Ironically, this profound experience of opening marked the beginning of two of the most miserable years of my life. I continued to meditate even as I felt the openness and spaciousness diminish. I struggled with the memory of what had opened in me as I tried to dissolve myself into the spaciousness that I knew was the ground of but not separate from me, all beings, all energies, and all conditions. Everything that could possibly go wrong in my personal life did. Problems that under other circumstances would perhaps never have surfaced manifested. Trauma after emotional and bodily trauma emerged. During this period, I remember reading about a Zen monk who said, "After *satori*, I was just as miserable as ever." I wanted to add, "After *satori*, I was *more* miserable than ever." I had gone to heaven and discovered that heaven and hell were the same place, and then I realized I had been brought to the place where, whether I wanted to or not, I would have to explore hell, my own personal hell. Although the details of my hell are different from everyone else's, I discovered that the structure of hell is similar for all of us. My descent into hell was a descent into a tangled web of misery and conflict at every level of my being and at every level of relationship. Wherever I turned I found myself thrust again and again into the bodily, emotional, mental, energetic, and cultural conflicts of myself and others.

On the Road to Nothingness

During this time I became fascinated with what I came to believe as the one of the most important books on the nature of the relationship of the human and the divine ever written, Martin Buber's *I and Thou*. In it, Buber distinguishes between two kinds of relationship: I-It and I-Thou. In an "I-It" relationship, you distance yourself from the other person and turn him or her into an object for use or manipulation. In an "I-Thou" relationship no such objectification can take place. Since there is no objectification, there can be no self in the ordinary sense to objectify the other. The objectifying self dies to itself in an "I" standing in openness and communion with another who reciprocates that openness and communion. Buber says that the human world is impossible without the I-It, but that those who live only in the I-It are not fully human.

I thought I understood and had experienced what Buber so eloquently described, but I was not sure. I noticed that many people who thought they understood Buber did not, instead confusing their sentimental experiences with what Buber called the I-Thou. And while I was not surprised, I was a little disgusted to discover that the academic study of communications was based on the I-It model. So, my next philosophical question turned out to be, "What is relationship?"

This question followed me around for months as I continually doubted my experience and understanding. Once again I was caught within the confines of a philosophical question. One year after my experience of the pure land and the body of the Buddha, on another cold, damp, gray December day, the answer happened.

I was driving through the Catskills with a strange and deeply disturbed person I hardly knew and did not want to know, only hours after I had been talking warmly with friends at the conclusion of a Zen retreat. As I was getting ready to leave the retreat, I mentioned that I was driving to Wilmington, Delaware and wondered aloud whether anyone wanted a ride. From nowhere, it seemed,

the most miserable, depressed, and sickly-looking person I had ever seen emerged from the group and asked if he could ride with me. "Oh no," I thought, "seven hours in a van with this guy. Why couldn't I just keep my mouth shut?" Thrown off-center and not knowing how to refuse, I said, "Sure."

Impossible as it seemed, George turned out to be more miserable and unhappy than he looked. He hardly spoke for the first hour and when he did, he muttered and mumbled so inaudibly that I found myself straining with great difficulty to understand him.

Suddenly, George said accusingly, "What are you doing to me, man?"

Puzzled, I looked at him. He was huddled against the door looking like a frightened, angry, wounded animal.

Unnerved, I replied, "What? What do you mean? I'm not doing anything to you."

"Yeah, you are," he said, glaring at me. I can feel something coming out of you, trying to get into me, pushing at the soles of my feet."

I had experienced energy moving between myself and others like this, and for a moment thought that maybe I really was unconsciously doing something. After all, George's strange behavior had put me on edge. But, when I examined my experience, I found I was not doing anything like what he described.

Before I could reply, George asked me to stop the van. He was feeling sick and thought he was going to throw up. I pulled over. He did not get sick, but he climbed into the back of the van, saying he would feel better if he could lie down.

We were not on the road five minutes before George crawled into the front seat complaining about how he could not resist the force pushing at his feet when lying down. He sat there looking at me as if I were the incarnation of some demonic energy trying to take over his body.

"It's O.K.," I thought, "you can keep your body, I don't want any part of it."

Looking for the turn-off to the freeway, I made the mistake of asking George if he knew which road we should take. He muttered something incomprehensible. The more he mumbled his inaudible half-sentences, the more confused I became. It was almost as if his very attempt to speak interfered with my ability to think. I was completely disoriented by George's presence and missed the turn-off. When I finally discovered we were way off course, I decided not to double back. I gambled that I could find the freeway by traveling the back roads. But nature seemed to conspire against me: it began to rain. As we wound through the uninhabited mountainous area, I feared we were on a road to nowhere. A dense fog settled in and an early darkness descended.

Forced to slow down by the roads and the weather, I drove on in a mild state of panic. Suddenly and without warning, all sense of boundary, limitation, and self fell away. A vast spaciousness replaced my little human world. It was as if I had been driving along in a hermetically sealed transparent globe so familiar and common that I had lost all awareness of it, and it was suddenly gone. Leaving no trace, my self evaporated into an unencumbered spacious expanse sailing with unimaginable ease through an even greater expanse. Right there, in my Dodge van, was the lotus land of purity and the body of the Buddha again, but somehow different this time—bigger and fuller, a vast spacious emptiness overflowing with a loving presence coming from nowhere and everywhere. Everything was embraced by this spacious allowing heart, which in essence was no-thing at all: fullness empty of all self and will lovingly embracing fullness everywhere; spaciousness leaping out of itself. No one that I could call "myself" was home and everything was at home as this spaciousness. And, of course, there was George, huddled against the door, looking bewildered but more peaceful.

George began talking and asking questions. Strangely, in this spaciousness where each thing was perfect just as it is, I could understand everything he uttered with absolute clarity. I was in

perfect accord with his every urge to be or not be and intuited what he wanted to say before he said it. I felt exactly what was going on in and around him at every moment. Before George finished any of his inaudible-half sentences, I knew the root of his difficulty and was speaking to it in great detail. Who was driving and where were all these words coming from? As spaciousness leapt out of itself and formlessness became form, the words poured forth in a joyful abandonment to speaking and driving.

George's fundamental confusion concerned human relationship. He had been devastated as a child. Terrified and alone, he felt all too clearly the shallowness and empty manipulative character of most people's interactions, and this frightened and hurt him deeply. Since he only knew the falsity and deceit of inauthentic I-It relationships, he had concluded that all forms of human interaction were absurd and meaningless. Existing with an uncanny inner sense of vacancy, George embodied a horrible existential contradiction. He desperately wanted to find himself and enter into authentic relationships with others, but, at the same time, he stood in opposition to himself with the rapacious tenacity of a warrior caught in a life-and-death struggle. As a result, he was in total confusion as to how to be in the world. Whenever he spoke or was in the presence of others, his every urge to communicate and be with others withered instantly in the misery of his own self-opposition and his judgment about the meaninglessness of human communication.

As we sailed effortlessly through the darkness and fog, I explained, without using Buber's words, the difference between an I-It and an I-Thou relationship. I said that the secular world is the sacred, that the forms and structures of human life and the body were the very space through which the sacred manifests. For a brief moment these words seemed to free George. He glimpsed how standing in opposition to his own nature as well as his attempt to disassociate from all form forced him to lose the very thing he wanted and needed most.

The words stopped. As I found our way to the freeway, George was able to rest in the peaceful silence that enveloped the both of us. He was quiet for a while and then abruptly blurted out, "Are you done talking?"

"Yes, I'm done. Do you have any more questions?"

George did not have any more questions. He began to brood in the silence and looked frightened again. "Why did you steal my cap?" he asked menacingly. "I saw you throw it into the back of the van."

When he hurled this accusation at me, I saw what George thought he saw me doing. I saw in his mind's eye an image of me throwing his cap in the back of the van. This time, however, his words did not disorient me. I stated quietly that I did not steal his cap. George bristled and became more agitated. Fortunately, he soon found his cap at his feet where he had dropped it. Somehow we managed to get to Wilmington without George accusing me of any more misdeeds. I dropped him off at the train station and never saw him again.

I often wondered how George would have described our trip. For me the journey revealed the essence of Buber's book and more. In order to enter into an I-Thou relationship, the ego-self has to be given up completely. The "I" that remains in the I-Thou relationship has been given many names throughout the world. It has been called the "true self," the *Atman*, the *Purusha*, the "Witness," the *Anthropus*, the *Homunculus*, the *chen-yen*, the *vir unus*, and many more. This self which is not an ego-self is nevertheless still a self. But the journey I had taken with George, while involving the true self and the ego-self at times, was largely a trip without a self at all. Because of our journey on the road to nothingness, I knew that deeper than any falling away of the ego-self was the complete dissolution of all selfhood. Ultimately, even the true self must be surrendered to the spaciousness of *this*. I learned that wisdom is a spaciousness that transcends the body-self but is not separate from the body, and that this resurrected, transformed body is the very place through which *this* is aware of itself.

The Way Up is the Way Down

Before my trip with George the miseries of my personal life seemed to be lifting. So I hoped, given what I had experienced on those mountain roads, that my life would continue to get better. I returned home only to discover the next layer of hell. Yes, heaven and hell were definitely the same place. What I thought had been in the process of being resolved was merely the next step in the beginning of more suffering.

Not enjoying it, but having no choice, I was continually drawn into myself, into my pain and into the mystery of what was happening to me. Twice thrown open into this spaciousness, I would never be the same again. At the same time, everything about me, my body, mind, and world, seemed to be stuck in the past, in the very ways of living that had helped to create my present miseries. It was as if the clarity of these experiences of spaciousness simply created an openness and into which all of my ignorant, blind, and foolish desires and feelings were emerging to die in their own agonizing way.

That spring, perfectly mirroring my experience, the septic tank in our rented house backed up into the basement. The landlord was slow in repairing the mess. With the synchronicity that only a Jungian could appreciate, I literally lived in the mess that my life had become. The day before the septic tank was to be repaired, I went to an ugly, tasteless B-movie. Somehow, in a way that the director could never have intended, the movie gave me surprising insight into the situations and people who had contributed to my present problems and I was able to begin the process of letting go of my anguished sense of betrayal and pain. As soon as the septic tank was repaired the next day, I began cleaning up the basement. As I happily hosed away the mess with clean water and watched it disappear quickly down the cleared drains, I felt as if I were being simultaneously washed clean.

I was amazed by the number and depth of unhealthy responses,

attitudes, beliefs, and feelings that had structured every level of my being. I could hardly believe how thoroughly I had allowed popular culture and other people to form my self. Without realizing it, I had taken on this contradictory mess of attitudes, feelings, and beliefs from all the trivial songs I listened to as a teenager, from television, from comics, from movies, from friends, from my parents and teachers, and many other sources. Even the attitudes and feelings I thought were stupid and empty were in some way still a part of me. I understood what Nietzsche meant when he said that you must take care in the fighting of dragons that you do not become one. In a very real way, you become what you hate.

As I reflected on these experiences I realized that each one of us and everything in the universe exists as form, or better, as forming and being formed. The concept of form includes outline, shape, or contour, but it is much more. Form is the very structure that allows each thing to be what it is. Form is the unique way, style, or manner in which a thing is or becomes what it is. Every form has boundaries, and the boundaries constitute part of the limits of the form. If the boundaries could somehow be removed, the form would cease to have limits. Without limits it would cease to have form and, hence, cease to be at all. To be is to be formed and limited. Longing for a world free of all limitation is longing for no world at all. The dualities with which we struggle throughout our entire life—our suffering and joy, our sense of bondage and freedom—all arise in no other place than the one in which we always and already are: the body. Whether we experience our dwelling place as the lotus land of purity or as the depraved realm of human misery, we always find ourselves manifesting as form and body.

In answering the question, “What is *this*?” I saw that *this* takes place in myriad forms. Each one of these forms, which includes you and me, is neither identical to nor other than *this*: the fullness, the spaciousness-loving embrace, the yielding- and presencing-forth without boundaries, which continually manifests as the limitations of space and time in order to be. *What* is always crumbles into *what*

is not: the limitations of form are spacious beyond measure, the temporal flow of experience rests in passageless time, and we all suffer.

With great difficulty, I struggled to understand and live the realization that this is neither identical to nor other than you, me, or the totality of all beings. Popular books on transformation describe these kinds of experiences as “becoming one” with nature, universal energy, cosmic consciousness, or God. Unfortunately, this characterization is quite misleading. By emphasizing the experience of unity, it misses entirely the plurality, diversity, and differences among the vast variety of beings that make up the totality of what is. Because this description loses the plurality of beings by reducing everything to a false oneness, I call it the “tapioca theory of realization.”

The experience of no-self and no-will in the lotus land of purity is the experience of the relationship of unity in diversity and diversity in unity. It is a preconceptual participatory knowing prior to but not separate from the manifestation of consciousness, self, and will. It reveals that the unity and diversity of all beings in the lotus land of purity is continually arising and passing away in a loving embrace that both contains and yields the totality of beings in togetherness and separateness. This kind of knowing is not the experience of becoming one with anything. Fundamentally, the nature of what *is* is without self and will, and without boundaries and form; this spacious, selfless, will-less, formless nature is also our nature. Since there is no self-nature at the ground of our existence or at the ground of existence in general, when the self and will evaporate in the primordial relationship of togetherness and separateness, no entity is left to become one with anything else. The separateness and togetherness of all beings is maintained in the loving embrace of *this*: no-thing, no-kind-of-being, no-kind-of-consciousness, no-self, no-will, and no-form, which is not and cannot be identical to any kind of being or to the totality of beings, and at the same time is not other than each and every being and the totality of all beings and relationships.

Because of the unspoken presuppositions and fossilized concepts of Western metaphysics, every attempt to put in words these experiences manifests in statements that, at first reading, sound perversely paradoxical. The fundamental question of Western metaphysics is "What is being?" In essence this question is the same as the one my Zen teacher gave me when he told me to contemplate "What is *this*?" This unbounded spacious realm in which we dwell is populated by a staggering variety of living and non-living things and energies. Each and every kind of thing, insofar as it exists, has being. You are a being, I'm a being, my chair is a being, a cloud is a being, a thought has being, consciousness has being, energy is a kind of being: everything that exists has being. As Zen poet Soek-Yoshi said "All are nothing but flowers in a flowering universe." The metaphysical question that arises from contemplating the great variety of beings is: "What is the being of beings?" To state the question more poetically, we could ask: "What is the being of this flowering universe?"

By and large, Western metaphysics has tended to answer the question of being by reducing being to a specific kind of being. The cosmological tradition of Christian theology, for example, answered the question "What is being?" by reducing being to a kind of super-being, a personal creator-god who created all the other beings. In the nineteenth century, Western metaphysics tended to answer the question by reducing being to will. Many popular New Age metaphysical books tend to perpetuate this same oblivion of being by reducing being to some kind of universal energy and consciousness. These and many other similar attempts to answer the question of being have so influenced our thinking that we find it difficult to hear what is being asked by the question. The loss of being that results from these sorts of answers can be made to stand out a bit more clearly if we reframe them in terms of Soek-Yoshi's poem. To say that the being of beings is itself a kind of being is like saying that the being of this flowering universe can be reduced to a single tulip.

My experiences showed me that all such attempts to reduce the unbounded spaciousness of *this* to any kind of energy, consciousness, universal mind, being, or super-being with which we are supposed to become one were fundamentally mistaken. If being is no kind of being, then in the lotus land of purity there can be no kind of being left over to become one with any other kind of being. Because the being of all beings is not any kind of being, and because every existing thing already has being, it is always and already present in the continual coming and going of all beings within this spacious flowering realm.

Being is void of being any kind of thing, being, consciousness, or energy. For this reason much of Eastern philosophy tends to answer the question of being by saying that being is nothingness. We can better understand this statement by a semantic device: “no-thing-ness.” Zen philosophy answers the question thus: being is no-thing-ness. As odd as such a claim might at first sound to Western ears, there are philosophers and contemplatives within our tradition who have grasped this same insight. Heidegger, a twentieth-century philosopher, expressed this insight by saying that the being of beings is not a being. The being of a being is given with the being; *it* is never separate from the being. Yet being is not a thing, property, predicate, consciousness, or any kind of energy. Heidegger makes the same point elsewhere when he says that the standing riddle of metaphysics is that the “actuality belongs to the actual and is just what makes the actual actual, without itself being something actual.”²

What the Buddhists call no-self, the great medieval Christian contemplative Meister Eckhart called “disinterestedness.” Disinterestedness is not the same as uninterestedness. In comparing how we perceive our world through the lens of our conflicted body-selves with our experience in the kingdom of God (or the lotus land of purity) he said, “Now I ask what the object of pure disinterest is. I reply that it is neither this nor that. Pure disinterestedness is empty nothingness.”³ The “empty nothingness” of disinterestedness is not

an annihilating vacuum. Eckhart clearly recognizes that the Godhead cannot be comprehended as some kind of super-being. He says that disinterestedness comes so close to zero that only God is rarified enough to enter the disinterested heart. No-thing-ness is a loving embrace so full of presence that it comes from nowhere and everywhere at once. *It* includes the one and the many, is not other than the one and the many, nor is it identical to the one and the many.

At first, such language might sound unnecessarily opaque and strangely contradictory. In both West and East, thousands of metaphysical treatises have been written in similarly dense language. When these treatises are based on authentic experience, they function like a compass pointing us in the right direction. When they are not based on experience, they remain misleading exercises in intellectual gymnastics. In the end, however, the question "What is being?" is more like a Zen koan than a simple request for a verbal, intellectual answer. The answer to the question "What is being?" is the same as the answer the Zen koan "What is *this*?"—the transformation of the whole person, body and all, who asks the question. As the academic and New Age pursuit of metaphysics so clearly demonstrates, this point is easily missed. Deceived by what the question truly asks, many thinkers pursue the question through their intellects alone and, as a result, few are transformed.

Unlike many professors of Eastern philosophy and popular writers on transformational philosophy, I am not suggesting that the intellect should be abandoned in the pursuit of this question. But I am saying that by itself the intellect is simply not adequate to the job. When we first ask the question of being, our intellect is necessary for understanding what is being asked. It is also necessary for understanding and assessing the directions in which the answers point us. Later, if the question dissolves our tangled web of misery and conflict and unearths *this* in our lives, our intellect must serve yet another purpose. As part of the process of fully integrating our full-bodied understanding of *this*, we must employ our

intellect in the philosophical articulation of what we have come to understand. To this end, my third Zen teacher once gave me the assignment of writing a paper on the movement between self and no-self as part of my answer to a koan.

My first experiences in Zen occurred in the desert of academic philosophy. The Zen teacher with whom I was studying at the time was compassionate, generous, and of great help to me. But he was not philosophically sophisticated enough to properly articulate the path. As a result, I remained deeply confused about what was happening to me. I found myself driven by my philosophical instincts to find a way to understand and articulate what I was experiencing.

Because of the nature of academic philosophy, I was not able to pursue these questions directly in my writings. As a result, a great deal of my academic publications in aesthetics were somewhat disguised attempts to dig my way out from under the philosophical quagmire that informs so much of how we think about our bodies, minds, and world. Our inheritance of dualistic and mechanistic philosophies sees the universe as a collection of objects and creates a way of thinking that tries to understand every phenomenon as the interaction of things and objects. This way of thinking continually stood in the way of my understanding.

In our object-ridden Western metaphysics, if X is not identical to Y, then it seems like obvious common sense to say that Y is other and separate from X. Here is a simple example: since your cup is not identical to your chair, they are not one and the same thing. They are obviously two separate and different things. But my experience showed me that *this* is neither *identical to* nor *other than* any kind of thing, being, consciousness, or energy. How then do you make sense of a claim like “X is both not identical to Y and not other than Y” when the common-sense view says just the opposite?

So many philosophical positions depend on assuming this common-sense view. For example, many philosophers use this presupposition to show why the body and mind are separate. They point

out that if I were to lose a part of my body in an accident, I would not have lost a part of my mind. This example, they think, proves that my mind is not identical to my body, and since mind is not identical to body it must be something other which exists in some other way than material objects do. According to Descartes, for example, while material objects take up measurable space, minds do not.

In the philosophy of art, many aestheticians claim that the work of art is an object totally different from the material out of which it is made. What hangs on the wall of art gallery, they say, is just a bunch of blobs of paint on a canvas. But a work of art is much more than just blobs of paint. Similarly, poems and novels are also much more than mere print on a page. Sound, they point out, is nothing more than a kind of vibration. When we appreciate a great musical performance, however, we are not listening to mere vibrations. Thus, music must be something over and above this mere physical medium. In general, since the work of art is not identical to the medium of which it is made, it must be something other. They often claim that the work of art, this something other, exists in the mind of the beholder or in some relationship between the medium and the mind of the beholder.

In Western philosophy, mind and body, the work of art and its physical medium, are often understood as two radically different kinds of things whose relationships to each other are difficult to fathom. In response to the dualistic emphasis on the separation and otherness of the "objects" in question, the monists deny separation and say that mind and body, work of art and the physical medium, are one and the same thing.

With little knowledge of the world's great philosophers, New Age "flow-and-glow" metaphysicians unconsciously embrace the Western tradition of thinking of the world as the interaction of things. As a result, they unwittingly conceptualize being as a superior kind of thing. Recognizing that dualism misses unity, they take a monistic stance and claim that the goal of spiritual work is to

become one with some kind of universal energy, super-being, or divine consciousness.

As a way to short-circuit the common-sense view of identity and otherness, I came up with an example that demonstrates why and how a work of art both can be not identical to its medium and at the same time not other than it.⁴ This same example also demonstrates that even though the mind is not identical to body, it need not be conceived as other than body. It also provides us with a logical analogy for understanding how *this* is both not identical to and not other than the diversity of beings.

Imagine that you own an old baggy wool sweater. Suppose you decide to unravel the sweater and make yourself a more fashionable jacket out of the wool. Finally after a lot of work, the day you finish making the jacket arrives. As you slip it on, you wonder, "Is the jacket identical to the wool of which it is made?" If you are tempted to answer yes, then an impossible conclusion seems to follow: the sweater is also identical to the jacket. But how can that be, since the sweater no longer exists? According to the law of identity, if X (the sweater) is identical to Y (the wool) and Y (the wool) is identical to Z (the jacket), then X (the sweater) must be identical to Z (the jacket). Since the jacket and the wool presently exist and the sweater doesn't, and since the sweater and the jacket are two different kinds of things, they cannot be one and the same thing. Clearly, neither the jacket nor the sweater are identical to the wool. Unlike the puzzles surrounding the relationships between mind and body and the work of art and its medium, no one is tempted to argue that the sweater and the jacket must be something other than the wool of which it is made, existing only in the mind of the fashion-conscious beholder. Questions of identity and questions about the stuff of which things are made are different questions. To generalize, no object is identical to the material of which it is made and no object is other than the material of which it is made. Thus, not all cases in which X is not identical to Y are cases in which X is other or over and above Y.

I recall a discussion in which one of my Zen teachers was engaged. In response to the idea of oneness in Zen, he suddenly and with great force spat out the phrase, "Not one! Not two!" For me, the logical exercise in aesthetic theory outlined above gave me a way to make conceptual sense of this expression and my experience. Of course, it is only an analogy and a limited one at that. But it does suggest how *this* is not identical to you or me, or any kind of super-being, divine consciousness, or universal energy, and yet is not other than beings that make up the totality of this flowering universe.

The analogy is ultimately misleading, however. It has the unfortunate consequence of making you think that *this* is some kind of ethereal substance out of which the totality of beings are made. But *this* is not any kind of substance at all—incorporeal or corporeal. If it were, we would be once again assuming that *this* is some kind of being. But *this* is the non-substantial loving groundless-ground of nothingness, which by no act of will yields the totality of beings in their mutual coming into and going out of being. Even Heidegger's brilliant formulation is ultimately misleading because it does not say enough. To say that the being of beings is not a being misses how the groundless ground of nothingness yields not only the totality of beings in this flowering universe, but also the being of this flowering universe. To be fair to Heidegger, however, I must point out that he did recognize the incompleteness of his first excursions into the question of being. In his later writings he speaks at length about the yielding-forth of being as the gift of presence.

For many intellectuals these philosophical ruminations are great fun. But if these questions are not grounded in the reality of our life and in a transformative practice, they remain merely entertaining academic puzzles. When they are properly grounded, they can provide us with a compass to find our way through the maze of contradictory claims about the meaning of human life. In today's world there is no shortage of spiritual pretenders, self-deceived

fools, and partially-realized teachers offering us an endless variety of truth and salvation. One of my Zen teachers once said, “In the trash heap of humanity it is difficult to tell the difference between the fool and the sage.” In such a world, a compass is certainly a useful tool.

When we are comfortable, we hardly ever ask the question of being in the right way. But when we suffer, we often engage the question of being with more depth and authenticity. During such times we might ask, “Why am I here?”, “What is the purpose of my life?”, “Who am I?”, “Why am I suffering?”, and so forth. Unfortunately, our ability to sustain the question is quite often undermined by our overwhelming desire to be free of our suffering. Our need to be free of pain continually tempts us to accept quick but false solutions.

When we suffer, we feel isolated, disconnected, and our life seems empty of meaning. Looking for meaning everywhere but where we always and already are, we fantasize a life free of all limitation and long for a sense of unity as the solution to our pain. We project our longed-for freedom onto a therapist or spiritual teacher, empowering him or her with the truth of what we always and already are, and remain imprisoned in our pain and emptiness. Because our suffering manifests in our bodies, we crave spiritual release in an out-of-body experience. Because our suffering takes place in the limitations of time and space, we hunger for liberation in an infinite and eternal realm. Because we suffer in contraction, we project expansion as truth.

In general, we hypostatize the opposite situation to the one in which we are suffering as the solution to life’s problems. Seeking the one, we lose the many. We worship our experiences of expansion as “God” and despise our experiences of contraction as the “devil.” We deny the secular in our search for the sacred. We long for peak experiences, paranormal occurrences, and extraordinary synchronistic events as proof of our spiritual progress, while continually passing over the truth that is right under our feet. We reject

our bodies and the things of the earth for an illusory heavenly realm in which our spirit can finally rest free. Even if we were to achieve all our spiritual fantasies and projections, we would not be free of our conflicted selves. In the end, a self-deceived fool in his own hometown will be the same fool in the astral plane. All the while, *that* which we are in search of is always and already here and now: *it* is never other than what is already present, as you and me and the whole world of form and bodies. At the same time, *it* is not identical to you, me, or the totality of what is.

In the extreme, George's struggle was the same as every person's struggle with the human condition. Without realizing how it happened, without realizing his part in its creation, George found himself hemmed in by a world of forms in which nothing mattered and no one cared. Finding no truth in the forms in which he and others participated, he wanted to break free of the limitation of forms. But the attempt to break free of form by abandoning form leads only to nihilism, non-being, and death.

In varying degrees and levels, we all experience the limitations of form as George experienced them, as limits that seem to prevent us from realizing the peace and meaning we all seek. And the most fundamental rock-bottom form of human existence is the body. Everyone suffers and in one way or another experiences their suffering at a bodily level. Who has not felt the pain of loss, disappointment, or grief? Who has not been driven by their anger, jealousy, pride, or sexuality? No matter how hard we try to rationalize it away, construct fancy theories of the unconscious, or project the cause of our suffering onto others, our misery always brings us back to the place from which and at which we suffer—the body.

The body has always been a problem for philosophers and religious teachers, so much so that spiritual realization and release have been falsely sought beyond the body. All sorts of theories and ascetic disciplines have been designed to mortify the body in order to break free of the chains of earthly suffering. For thousands of years, meaning and spiritual truth have been projected outside the

body and beyond our earthly existence to a place of no abode where no living, feeling, human being could possibly exist. This experience of suffering which seems to arise from our earthly embodiment is what Chuang Tzu recognized as the death of Chaos. It constitutes the essence of the human sickness, and it is a sickness that we all participate in at one level or another. Even the health-and-fitness fad, which in itself expresses a desirable and healthy attitude, often disguises a profound disgust for bodily existence by conceiving of the body as a machine-like thing to be willfully dominated and whipped into shape according to the latest narcissistic dream of an ultimate hard-body that will live way beyond normal life expectancies.

My experiences, however, showed me clearly that the limitations of form are simply the essential conditions that allow us to be at all. Far from being the simple cause of suffering, the limitations of form are, as I discovered, the very structure through which the spaciousness of *this* comes to presence. The boundaries of my body are not the limits at which I stop being. They are the limitations at which I begin being.

The manifest universe and all that is in it is like a great work of art. Art can only happen in form. The limitations of form do not prevent or constrain art, but provide the very structure through which the creative freedom of art can come to presence. Art cannot happen through a blind adherence to tradition and rigid form. Nor can art happen in the complete negation of all form and tradition. Art, like the realization of human freedom, happens by being released *in* form and limitation, not apart from form and limitation.

“This very body,” Hakuin said, “is the body of the Buddha.” This very body is both the medium of communion with others and the foundation of community, as Buber so clearly understood. The spaciousness of *this* is the clearing in which relationship happens. The spacious body of the Buddha is who and what we are as human beings. We are not the body that Descartes thought was a soft

machine, that Plato described as the disfigurement and prison-house of the soul, or that countless others have mistakenly believed to be at the root of sin and suffering. The body of the Buddha, this body of God, is a wisdom-body, a spacious body which provides the limitation and form through which we become who we are and enter into proper relationship with others. It is where *this* can know itself as all of this.

Looking back at this tumultuous time in my life, I cannot say that I understood what was happening with the clarity that I do now, years later. But since my instincts were those of a philosopher, I continued to work toward conceptualizing what I was going through. As a graduate student and professor, I was never able to fully embrace the academic mind and its approach to life. I used to joke that communications departments were filled with people who didn't know how to talk to one another, that psychology departments attracted the mentally ill, that biologists were not interested in life, that theologians no longer believed in God, and that philosophy departments were populated by irrational people.

But philosophy, I realized, was a discipline in freedom, freedom from the bondage with which every human being struggles. Philosophy is much more than the scholastic garrulousness and conceptual one-upmanship so prevalent in the university. A philosopher is someone who is gripped by these fundamental questions of human life and who is transformed and liberated in the process of trying to answer them.

In fact, philosophy is the only discipline that can ask these fundamental questions. Often you will find philosophical questions in other disciplines and areas of human endeavor, such as science, psychology, or religion, but such a discovery only means these disciplines are returning to their own proper origin. The origin of religion is not religion, the origin of psychology is not psychology and the origin of physics is not physics—it is philosophy. Most of what people call religion is simply blind belief in certain dogmatic pronouncements sometimes coupled with group-supported

emotionalism. But the ground of true religion is the quest of philosophy. In the modern world, a number of psychologists have taken on the mantle of the philosopher and religious teacher. But psychology and philosophy are different. Because psychology is always constrained by having to view everything through the lens of the psyche, it can never understand the spacious body of no-self or what *this* is. As brilliant and important as Jung's investigations are into what he called the individuation process, he never properly understood the transformation and role of the body in the spiritual quest, and he never realized that beyond the integrated self, which he said was the goal of the individuation process, is the experience of no-self.

Wisdom is not knowledge; but there is no wisdom without knowledge. Those who have knowledge do not automatically have wisdom. Wisdom is that spaciousness which sees itself as all of this. "Philosophy" literally means "the love of wisdom." But philosophy could also be called the love of spaciousness, or, what is the same thing, the spaciousness of love. Philosophy is thus a fundamental human quest. Our true heritage is the philosophical domain of inquiry which has as its goal the transformation of the whole being.

The Way Out is the Way In

As I said, I never really felt at home in the academic world. The deeper my insights went, the more difficult it became for me to live with the academic philosopher's pernicious refusal to properly ask or even entertain fundamental questions. I knew I had to leave the university, but I had no idea as to how to do it and still support my family.

The year my bid for tenure came up was the same year the septic tank overflowed into our basement. It was also the same year in which I found myself strangely at odds with my Zen training. Up until this point, my Zen practice had been intense, deeply

disturbing, and far from comfortable. Nevertheless, I felt as though I had found my home with my second Zen teacher and the group that had formed around him. Quietly and for no reason that I could fathom at first, as the internal pressures to leave the university increased, a strange and unseen force seemed to be undermining my relationship with my teacher. Saddened and puzzled, I continued to sit in meditation and attend retreats even though my sense of not belonging increased. As my discomfort intensified, I assumed that I was the source of the problem. Then, just before I was about to begin a retreat, I learned that my teacher had been involved in a number of serious improprieties. I was dumbstruck. As I listened in horror to the stories and the attempts of some deluded students to reinterpret the teacher's actions as spiritual teaching devices, I finally understood what I had been feeling. I tried to keep an open mind about my teacher. At the same time, I realized that I could no longer study with him.

I stayed and completed the retreat. On the final evening, I noticed a book about Zen lying on the floor in the corner of my room. I picked it up and thumbed through it. I remember being particularly struck with the power of the photographs of the Japanese *Roshi* who authored the book. Something about his gestures reached out and grabbed my attention. It was as if the photographs had captured a great actor in the midst of a number of powerfully moving scenes. Here, in unencumbered clarity, was a Zen teacher manifesting the presence of no-self embracing the human world with such straightforward forceful directness that I found myself selflessly riveted to the photographs for a brief moment. I put the book down and fell immediately into a deep sleep.

I dreamed I was sitting before the teacher in the photographs for private instruction in koan study, called *sanzen*. With uncanny, razor-sharp precision, he saw to my very core. His mere presence exposed how my supercilious self was standing in the way of my Zen practice. Wordlessly, he confronted and cornered me with such unrelenting merciless understanding that I was given no way

to escape the mirror his presence provided. Speechless, all I could do was look at what he had silently exposed in me. I awoke the next morning with a vivid memory of this extraordinary dream. As I hurried off in the early morning darkness for the day's first meditation, I was filled with the unpremeditated conviction that I must study with this Roshi.

After I was granted tenure, I used my sabbatical to travel to where this teacher offered Zen retreats, or *sesshin*. I signed up for the first available retreat. On the morning of the first day of the sesshin, I was filled with wild anticipation as I sat in meditation awaiting my first sanzen. From the very first moment I entered the room, through four sanzen sessions a day over the next four days, I relived my dream. The Roshi instantly became the mirror of my conflicted self. It was terrible, uncanny, and amazing all at once.

At one point, he asked me the question I most dreaded but knew he would ask eventually: "What kind of work you do?"

Trying to avoid naming my profession to him, I said, "I am a teacher." I hoped he would think I taught something like high school English.

With a humorous glint in his eye he asked, "Oh? What you teach?"

"Oh jeez," I thought, "here it comes!" I answered, "Philosophy."

He slapped his knee, laughed uproariously, and rang his little bell announcing that I was dismissed.

From then on, instead of calling me by name he would growl, "Professssaaaa!" or "Doctorrghh!" and ask me outrageous questions. After I had passed the koan "What is *this*?" under the tutelage of my previous teacher, I was assigned the meditative practice of "becoming a mountain of silence," called *shikantaza* in the Japanese Zen tradition. The Roshi wanted to know what my practice had been with my previous teacher. I reported that I had been practicing shikantaza. Without a moment's hesitation, he said, "*Ahh. . . Show me your shikantazaaaa.*" Of course, I couldn't. I had no idea what he was asking of me. I tried answering the way I had with

my previous teacher. I made eye contact with Roshi and let myself fall into a flow of energy toward him. He made a guttural sound that displayed his displeasure with my answer and closed his eyes. In the next instant, I felt a ball of energy about the size of a softball brush into my chest and dissipate with a puff. He opened his eyes and said, "Huh? You feel Roshi? Bump! *Ha Ha Ha*." Clearly he had no interest in the energetic side of Zen practice. He imitated my gesture and once again laughed me out of the room.

When it became clear that I couldn't show him shikantaza, he asked me more questions I couldn't answer, like: "How do you realize your true nature while gazing at a pine tree?" or "How do you realize your true nature while listening to a dog bark?" The questions kept coming and I was reduced to speechlessness.

His eyes laughing, he asked mockingly, "Ohh, professssssaaaaa, how long you study Zen?"

For a brief moment, I considered lying and claiming one year, but instead answered with the truth. "Seven years," I said.

His eyes opened wide in utter amazement. He looked at me as if I had obtained a fraudulent Ph.D. through a mail-order catalogue. He slowly shook his head in disbelief, and under his breath said, "Not good...."

This sort of treatment continued for four days. He was relentless. Once during his morning lecture he even talked about me to the group. He said, "I give koan to child about how you realize true nature when hear dog bark, and child can answer, no problem. I give same koan to professor of philosophy and he can't answer!" On and on it went. I could not understand why he was being so cruel to me.

During the morning lecture on the fifth day, something in me quietly dissolved. I no longer remember much of Roshi's talk. All I remember is that when he used the word "yielding" to describe the fundamental nature of the universe, my eyes uncontrollably filled with tears and washed down my face. These were not the tears of sadness, joy, regret, or of some sort of sudden illumination. They

were simply the soft, sweet tears of gratitude that arise in the free realization of the truth of what is being said. Without warning or drama, the part of me that was standing in the way of my knowing and being this simple truth had vanished. From that moment on, Roshi never again treated me as he had for those four days.

Months later, I realized why he had behaved as he did. Because of the many books I had read on Zen and what I had learned from my previous Zen teachers, I was filled with the foolish notion that satori was some sort of great heroic achievement. As a result, my previous experiences of the lotus land of purity and the trip with George had left with me with an unshakable arrogant pride over what I had “accomplished” in Zen. In secret embarrassment, I would often recognize my spiritual superciliousness, and often stood aghast in the face of it. It was always there every time I talked or thought about Zen or myself. My previous teacher never saw it. Another Zen teacher I briefly studied with after I left my second teacher spotted it, but was unable to do anything about it. This teacher, however, wordlessly and instantly saw me and saw through me. Through his instantaneous perception of who I was he simultaneously mirrored myself back to me. He was not being cruel to me, but was mirroring my superciliousness in an exaggerated way. He so thoroughly killed my arrogance and along with it my heroic fantasies about Zen practice that I even stupidly considered quitting practicing altogether. I could not quit, of course. For I had finally found, at long last, the philosophical Zen teacher for whom I had been looking.

That summer, while living at one of Roshi's Zen centers, I discovered Rolfing. Some friends knew that I had some painful spells with my back and suggested I get Rolfed. I knew absolutely nothing about Rolfing, about how it approached the body, or what its goals were. My back wasn't troubling me at the time and, more or less on a whim, I decided to try it. Maybe it would help prevent future back problems and maybe it wouldn't. I was simply drawn to try it.

The results of the first session were extraordinary. I felt lighter and freer as though a heavy burden that I had forgotten I was carrying was suddenly lifted from me. But more importantly, I experienced a dimension of that same sense of spaciousness that had become familiar to me through Zen meditation. The Rolfing experience also hinted to me that I needed to explore more deeply the meaning of the earlier realization that this very body is the body of the Buddha. After my second session, I knew that Rolfing was much more than just another form of massage, bodywork, or physical therapy, and that I had to learn how to do it. The spacious clarity I experienced was wonderful. In addition, I found myself walking taller and more fluidly. Rolfing brought my body up-to-date with my life and, therefore, sped up the integration of my previous experiences. I have often wondered how the Western world would have been affected had philosophers like Plato or Descartes been Rolfed. Any one who has truly experienced Rolfing could never be tempted to believe Western philosophy's limited assumptions about the body.

In any case, I had found my way out of the academic world. I began training to become a Rolfer and nine years later I became a Rolfing Instructor.

With the eyes of a Rolfer and the discipline and experiences of a Zen student, I saw the world in an entirely different light. All my life I had been able to feel in my own body the emotional states of others. After Rolfing training, I could actually see it in their bodies. Kierkegaard said that selfhood was not a given, but a task. For some of us, this task has been achieved well. For others, it hasn't. Somatically, I would state Kierkegaard's insight by saying that uprightness, with all of its moral and spiritual connotations, is not a given, but also a task to be achieved. Uprightness and selfhood are really two aspects of the same process. At a very fundamental level, we *are* our bodies. The body is not a thing that we somehow mysteriously inhabit, like a ghost in a machine. The body is the living shape or form of the self. The manner in which we

have become the unique person we are is very much a matter of how we move through space and bodily come to presence as this living space that we are.

I began to see with increasing clarity how our joys and miseries, our fears and accomplishments, our hopes and dreams, are all manifest in the way we occupy our space and time and come to presence as our bodies. Look at the people around you: some bodies seem to collapse in an expression of defeat, resignation, fear, or neediness. Others are hypererect, displaying superciliousness, grandiosity, or contempt. Still others look like a whipped dog—were they to have a tail it would be between their legs. Have you ever noticed the confusion in the eyes of those whose bodies that seem to be going in a couple of incompatible directions at once? All of these conflicts and distortions in one way or another are psychospacial and psychotemporal problems, conflicts in our manner and mode of being present. Or, to put it in Rolfing terms, these distortions represent a struggle with one of the most fundamental limitations of human existence—gravity.

The patterns of human misery are many, the details are endless, and everywhere you look you can see our struggle with gravity and form. I know that this spacious body is the body of the Buddha and that this very place is the lotus land of purity. But I also know that almost all of us are in conflict with the forms and limits of our lives and bodies, and are mistakenly seeking peace and meaning everywhere but where we always and already are. Everyone suffers, everyone suffers bodily, and everyone is either dominating, denying, or trying to depart their body, or what is the same thing, their self.

Rolfing gave me a way of beginning to ease the distortions of the world by easing the distortions of the body. Upright is not uptight. Peace with gravity is peace with oneself and the limitations of human existence. At the deepest level, by releasing and evoking a new level of order in the body in relation to gravity, Rolfing can assist those who are pursuing a philosophical or spiritual

path. Some people are almost miraculously transformed at every level of their being through Rolfing. Others experience more modest changes. Some only seek and find relief from their physical pain and that eases them along to a slightly higher level of well-being. True uprightness, however, is not a simple matter of standing straight. It is the creation of a spacious body, a wisdom-body which is the place of spiritual transformation. Obviously, Rolfing cannot automatically bring everyone who undergoes it spiritual illumination but it can bring many a taste of this spacious body.

I once gave a lecture and Rolfing demonstration to a group of physicians. After I had finished working on the doctor who had volunteered, one of his colleagues asked him how he felt. I do not know if anyone was as delighted with his answer as I was, but what he said was, "You know, before the session it was like being in this little room. And now, after the session, it's like being in a great big room."

Before my first taste of Rolfing, Zen was my only source of transformational experience. Because Rolfing had such a profound effect on me and others I talked to, I wondered how many other effective therapies and transformational disciplines I may have missed. I decided to explore as many of them as I reasonably could afford, personally and financially. After many years of experimentation with a great Zen teacher, several half-realized teachers, self-deceived teachers, somatic therapy teachers, and charlatans, a powerful psychopathic healer, a variety of brilliant and stupid psychics, a number of different therapists, transformational group leaders, and many others, I realized that we can always learn from others. I also learned how easy it is to be deceived by others, whether they were conscious of what they were doing or not. Given that the layers of deception and conflicted needs in ourselves and others goes so deep, a disturbing but important question always confronts us: "How do we know whether we are on the right path or not?" The truth is that no straightforward and simple answer exists. This question is always part of the human struggle for freedom.

When we cease asking the question, we start down the road toward losing our freedom.

All too often we hope to find some kind of super-human guru to whom we can look for all the answers. Instead of pursuing our own freedom, we project all our fantasies about enlightenment onto these figures. The result is not freedom, but another form of bondage. Unfortunately, our world is filled with too many people who are willing and quite able to carry these projections.

Stumbling around in our ignorance, we must find our own way, and yet we need the help of others. At first, we are like someone trapped in a dark cave, bumping into things and hurting ourselves. Sometimes we find a person who claims to have a light that will set us free, and we follow him or her for a while. After a while, we realize that we have never seen this teacher's light and we are still painfully bumping into things. If we blindly have faith in a light that we have never seen, then, more than likely, we have been caught in another's person's prison. From these experiences we may learn how easily we can be deceived. No matter how comfortable we may feel with a teacher and his descriptions of the light, we eventually ought to be able to see with it. Perhaps we will be taken in by many such false lights. Then one day we may discover someone who actually has a light and, by means of it, we see. After the novelty and excitement wears off, we may make the disappointing discovery that our teacher's light only extends two feet in front of her. As we continue along this path of discovery we become smarter and more able to see the truth of what we are being taught. In time we may find a real beacon of truth. Finally, we must make this illumination our illumination. For, in the end, we are the illumination in the cave—and there is no cave.

Notes

1. This translation of Chuang Tzu is based on my meditative reading of a number of translations from these sources: *A Source Book in*

Chinese Philosophy, Chuang Tsu: Inner Chapters, The Texts of Taoism, and Thomas Merton's *The Way of Chuang Tzu*. See the Bibliography for complete information on the works consulted.

2. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Illinois: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 103.

3. Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart*, translated by Raymond B. Blakney (New York: Harper & Row, 1941), p. 88.

4. See "Identity, Ontology, and The Work of Art," reprinted in *Philosophical Issues in Art*, edited by Patricia H. Werhane (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1984), pp. 503-517.

CHAPTER TWO

Experiences of Transformation

I HAVE MENTIONED Plato and Descartes a number of times because their views on the nature of the body and the self have been important and instrumental to the way we understand our world. Their ideas have so shaped Western culture and thought that even people who have never heard of these philosophers embrace their views as true. Modern science, biology, and allopathic medicine are unthinkable without the philosophical foundation provided by Plato and Descartes. One of the most important metaphysical assumptions of the Cartesian philosophy for modern science is the idea that the human body, like all of nature, is nothing but a machine to be understood according to the principle of causality and articulated in the language of mathematics. Descartes located the essence of the human person in the mind. He claimed that the mind was a non-bodily, non-physical entity that in some mysterious way inhabited and ran its machine-body. Like Plato, Descartes viewed the mind and body as two entirely separate and distinct things. Descartes would agree with Plato's analogy that the mind is to the body as the pilot is to the ship. Descartes, however, contributed the notion that the body is a machine. This mechanistic assumption was later picked up and championed by Newton.

By the nineteenth century, Cartesian/Newtonian mechanistic science had proven itself and become a major cultural force in West-

ern society. As a result, most people, including most scientists, had become oblivious to the Cartesian metaphysics that informed their most basic and unquestioned assumptions about reality. So thorough is this oblivion today that almost no one recognizes that this mechanistic view of life rests on a very questionable metaphysical assumption. So thorough and unthinking is our commitment to this view, in fact, that many have taken the next step within a mechanistic metaphysics. Lacking the obvious philosophical genius of Descartes, some have gone further and made the astounding claim that the whole human person (body *and* mind) is nothing other than a “soft machine”—a complicated, intricate, and beautiful machine perhaps, but a machine nonetheless.

The view that mind and body are two entirely separate and distinct things is called metaphysical dualism. Dualism is found in most cultures. The peculiarly Western addition to this theory is that the bodily member of the pair is a soft machine.

There is some basis in experience for making a distinction between the inner and the outer aspects of a person. We say, “You should put on a happy face, even if you’re crying on the inside,” or “You can’t let everyone see your inner self,” or “My innermost wish is to get out of this relationship even though I never will,” and so forth. What we call “inner” usually means the truest, deepest part of our self, and what we call “outer” usually means the more superficial social facade we present to others. Often our deepest experiences and feelings seem to well up from somewhere deep inside, while mildly interesting external events barely touch us at all. If you use “inner” and “outer” to describe such experiences, you are not automatically a metaphysical dualist. However, if you say that “inner” applies to your mind and that “outer” applies to your body and that mind and body are two different things, you have entered the realm of metaphysical dualism.

Since this dualistic view of the body as a soft machine is such a pervasive, unquestioned fundamental assumption in our culture, it has become difficult, if not impossible, to think about ourselves

in any other terms. Our own experience of suffering also leads us to think of ourselves as separate from our bodies. Yet no matter where we locate our suffering, whether in our minds or bodies, no matter how we refer to it, whether inner or outer, our suffering is always experienced, one way or another, as bodily. Given the universal fact of suffering, and our reluctance to accept this fact, it is indeed tempting to believe that the body is the prisonhouse of the soul and a soft machine, that this suffering thing we call the body is not really who and what we are.

Yet my experience leads me to say, "I am my body, you are your body." This sounds very strange to modern ears. I want to articulate my experience by saying that what we call our "self" is none other than our body and that our body-self is a psychospacial orientation. In Chapter Six, I claim that our body-self is also a psychotemporal orientation. Unfortunately, since most of us think of our bodies as a problematic thing which we often experience as something other than our innermost self, these claims may be difficult to understand at first. I can say I am my body, but I have yet to meet a person who likes his or her body. With a firmly implanted belief that our body is nothing but a soft machine, a mere biochemical, neurophysiological apparatus, who in their right mind can really believe and say, "I am my body"?

My use of the word "body" does not denote a soft machine or some kind of object that I inhabit; by "self" I do not mean some sort of non-bodily immaterial thing or object. When I talk about "space" in reference to the spacious body, I do not mean the measurable space of science or a Cartesian coordinate system. And by "time" I do not mean the intervals that are measured off by means of clocks, calendars, and other devices. My task of articulating what the spacious body is and what the self is, without falling prey to the inadequate and inappropriate concepts of Western metaphysics and scientism, is a challenging one. Theory, cultural bias, and the universal experience of suffering seem to work against understanding the spacious body and how the self could possibly be a bodily, psychospacial event.

Instead of engaging in a traditional philosophical argument in support of my claims, I would rather draw your attention to your own sense of embodiment by describing a number of my client's experiences of transformation. The very attempt to describe these experiences will display the inadequacy of our traditional way of talking about ourselves and our bodies. Since transformation of the self is none other than transformation of the body, we gain a better understanding of the nature of our own body-self when we look at the experiences of others as they undergo transformation. We can learn about our own embodiment by feeling our way into these people's struggles with form, their breakthroughs, and the unique ways in which they spatialize their lives. These descriptions will also pave the way for the more comprehensive theoretical orientation of Chapter Three.

Most of the people who come to me for Rolfing merely want relief from their pain. Some want better posture. Athletes and dancers hope for enhanced performance. But some of the people who seek out Rolfing for better posture or relief from pain are also looking for something else—a way to transform their lives.

It is important to understand that the people discussed here cannot be summed up in the defensive strategies they display. A human being is always more than his or her defenses. Equally important to understand is that their breakthroughs are not the culmination of a long process, but really its beginning.

Marcie

Like so many people I see, Marcie's body is collapsed, round-shouldered and much too soft. Unlike a dense body-person or a rigid body-person, a soft body-person is almost without defenses, too sensitive, often to the point of being completely overwhelmed by the negative aspects of the world. Marcie's unspoken desire is to flee the world of form. She accomplishes this flight by spatializing her body as a form that wants to be formless. Her manner of

being present in the present displays the desire *not* to be present in the present. Not wanting to be present is the way I define fear psychospatially.

Think about how you might react if King Kong came crashing into your living room. It would be completely pointless to stand up to this kind of ferocious power. Unless you were a certain kind of psychopath, you would probably try to run away. Running away is obviously a form of fear and a way of not being present. Or perhaps you might just collapse into a dead faint. While fainting may not be the most effective way of saving your life, it is certainly a guaranteed way of not being present.

When a mother is hostile and angry toward her infant and will not or cannot provide a safe, secure, warm, and nourishing, environment, the child grows up without any deep and abiding trust in herself or her world. She becomes insecure, needy, ungrounded and fearful. Since she has never been given the maternal support necessary to trust her world and to trust in her own body and personal power, she collapses into the bodily form of not wanting to be present.

The word “form” as I use it here includes but is much more than shape as outline or contour. Living form is the way, style, or manner in which a person is or becomes who and what she is. A conflict in a person’s sense of who she is not just a psychological problem that has nothing to do with the body. Any conflict at the level of self is already a conflict of form, in the bodily manner and way in which we are present. To be is to be a form and every form has its own unique limits or boundaries that allow it to be that form. Remove the limits or boundaries of a form and the form ceases to be. The bodily form of fear is soft and collapsed. Not wanting to be present requires a body and lifestyle whose boundaries and limits are not clear. Like fainting, the soft collapsed body of fear is a form that wants to be formless. Fear is the swoon toward formlessness.

Until she began Rolfing, Marcie rarely experienced her fear directly. She said she felt insecure, needy, ineffectual, and at times

experienced a sense of inner vacancy. Because she felt too skinny and soft, she had tried weightlifting and rigorous exercise programs but complained of never being able to add muscle or firmness to her body. She did not like to work and admitted that she thought the world owed her a living. The collapse of her body served to block her awareness of fear and anger. The softness kept her from ever being able to contain her energy or power long enough in order to mobilize it for action. Although Marcie was hardly aware of it at first, the energy that she refused to contain for action also served another purpose. It was spread out all over the room like some omnidirectional radar system monitoring the safety of her surroundings.

After a number of Rolfing sessions, Marcie began lifting up and out of her collapse, but she still carried her head and neck too far in front of the rest of her body. Her shoulders were still pulled up and in as if she were frozen in fright. During a session in which I was attempting to ease her shoulders and bring her head and neck to a more balanced position on top of her body, she began to shiver uncontrollably on the table as if she were suddenly freezing cold. At first she was surprised and somewhat embarrassed by what her body was doing without her permission, and tried to control the shivering. But this only seemed to make her feel more uncomfortable. On my advice, she let herself go into the shaking. Almost immediately she complained of a constriction in her throat. With her permission I gently placed my hand over her throat and asked her to close her eyes. She trembled even more intensely and her jaw began to quiver. I then gently pulled her hair with my other hand. This action brought forth a whimper and then a series of what sounded like muffled screams.

After the trembling and whimpering subsided, Marcie told me that she had relived her experiences as a toddler when her mother used to take out her anger and hostility on her. She saw her mother's angry, hostile face and experienced the fear she would feel when her mother yanked her around the room by her hair. The constrict-

tion she felt in her throat was both the repression of her screams and the expression of being invaded by undeserved and powerful forces that threatened the integrity of her developing self. Being invaded by her mother's anger and hostility while she was still a dependent toddler utterly precluded running away. Thus, it is not at all surprising that she instead choose not to be present by becoming a collapsed, soft, formless person.

Rolfing clearly and powerfully brought Marcie's fear to the surface. With truly amazing courage she committed herself completely to her own transformation. In the weeks and months that followed she was again and again brought face-to-face with her fear. She would feel clear and happy for a while and then for no apparent reason she would become stricken with fear and panic. Before Rolfing she had been hypersensitive to the emotional states of others. But now she actually felt with unerring precision and clarity in her own body what those around her were feeling often before they even knew it themselves. Being around others when her fear surfaced was almost unbearable for her, but Marcie remained committed to her process. As her life and body took on more and more form and structure, her fear became less and less overwhelming. At the same time, it began to become obvious to both of us that her fear was in some way rooted in anxiety.

Ordinary language seems to admit no differences between "fear" and "anxiety." But there are clear and important differences. Kierkegaard was the first philosopher to actually make the distinction and analyze the differences; Heidegger appropriated and expanded Kierkegaard's analysis. Anxiety can be defined as the threat of non-being. In the experience of fear, you are afraid of a specific object, person, or situation, and you also have a kind of direction, or orientation in space sometimes toward but usually away from the object of fear. In anxiety, as Heidegger points out, there is no specific object about which you are anxious. The sense of being threatened does not seem to come from any one place or object, but is diffuse, seeming to come from everywhere.

Because of the nondirectionality of anxiety, it is useless to try to run away. Anxiety is more global than fear, it seems to be everywhere around you and, unlike fear, threatens the very core of your being. Psychospatially, I defined fear as not wanting to be present; anxiety defined psychospatially is the threat of not being able to be present at all.

Many psychologists do not understand the difference between anxiety and fear. Those who do recognize that whereas anxiety strikes at the core of the self, fear is a much more surface phenomenon. But if, as I believe, the self is a psychospatial event, the way fear and anxiety are spatialized somatically must be made clear. This distinction is also important for understanding Marcie's way of being in the world.

What emerged from our work together was that Marcie's fear was a defense against anxiety. By swooning into the formlessness of not wanting to be present, Marcie was able to avoid the terrible threat of non-being, of having the very possibility of her being present at all simply vanish into nothingness. Developmentally, her difficulties began even before she could walk, before she had developed a mobile and independent self. As a result, she never had the option of being able to bodily leave her hostile space. So she chose the next best thing, which was to let go at the boundaries of her developing self and body so as not to be present during her mother's continual attacks on the very space on which she depended in order to be. In the choice of whether to be or not to be, Marcie chose to be by not being present in the present.

If no one interfered with our natural and appropriate responses of anger when we were children, normally we will respond with anger to threats to our way of being present. Psychospatially, anger is a way of protecting one's way of being present by eliminating the object that threatens presence. In Marcie's case, the anger was there but buried deep in her core where she would not allow herself to feel it. As her Rolfing continued, she experienced both her anger and her fear of that anger. She remembered feeling as a child that

were her anger to emerge she would surely have been obliterated—by her mother and by her anger. Since she was never granted the option of protecting herself or running away, her rage was extreme, intense, and frightening when it finally surfaced.

As I have been suggesting, every emotion, and indeed every form of consciousness, is a unique way of organizing and orienting body and self in space. Observe the body and the way of being present of an angry person, a depressed person, a sad person, an embarrassed person, or a joyful person. They all spatialize themselves differently than a fearful person. In contrast to the soft body's way of not being present, for example, a person who is primarily caught in blocking anger spatializes and manifests a hard, unyielding, and aggressive body. As we shall see, the hard, unyielding body is a different form of defense against anxiety than the soft body of fear.

To be is to be a form. To be a human form is to be a mode of orientation in space.

Imagine that a friend asks you, "Where did you put that book you were reading this morning?" and you turn and say, "Over there next to the phone." Notice that your turning and saying "over there" is a way of orienting in space and toward something in space. Suppose the person was not a friend, but an irritating pest who was always losing and ruining your books. Your turning and saying "over there" would be an entirely different form of spatializing and orienting. Your gesture, instead of being relaxed and casual, would be uncommitted to pointing to the book. In an effort to be "nice" you might even try to disguise your irritation. Notice that in order to orient yourself toward something you must have a place from which to orient. So whether you turn and say "over there" in anger or irritation, in the spirit of giving, or in embarrassment, psychospatially there is both the place from which you orient and your orientation toward something. Depending on how you feel and what you believe—consciously or unconsciously—about your situation at each moment, your orientation and the place from which you orient will change form accordingly. I have stated that anxiety

threatens the core and fear is more surface. Core and surface are not mere spatial metaphors, but two aspects of the unified psychospatial totality of the body-self.

At one level the core is the place from which we orient toward our world and the surface is the orientation. The core is both the core of the body and the core of the self; the surface is both the surface of the body and of the self. We also can make this distinction by saying that the core has to do with our being, and the surface with our doing. It is ironic that we call ourselves human *be*-ings, but the orientation of our culture supports the unspoken superficial assumption that we are nothing but human *do*-ings. The core or being of a person is what I call allowing. The surface is willing, or simply the will.

Because of the philosophical bias of our culture, when we learn that the core is allowing we tend to think of it as passive. But allowing is both prior to and the foundation of both activity and passivity. Passivity is, in fact, an act of will: remaining quiet instead of speaking up, or trying to blend into the crowd in order not to be seen are just as much willful acts as trying to dominate others. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, allowing is in many ways more powerful than any act of will. Falling in love, forgiving another person, appreciating a beautiful sunset or a work of art, engaging in an inspired act of creativity, are all acts of allowing. At the level of realized spirituality, the core is the event of appropriate relationship and the realization of *this*.

I will return to the distinction between core and surface in Chapter Five and provide some anatomical, structural, and functional descriptions of them. For the purposes of my discussion here, however, I will limit the descriptions of core and surface to the experiential, philosophical, and, at times, the psychological point of view.

Consciousness, no matter how rudimentary, no matter how confused, conflicted, or unconflicted it might be, is already a form and orientation toward reality. Every such orientation is always and already a mode of bodily occupying lived space. Essential to

understanding the nature of fear and anxiety and Marcie's way of being in the world is the realization that the self is a psychospacial reality that consists of a core and surface. For the purposes of my discussion here, however, the most important features of the core and surface are that the core is the place from which we orient toward our world and the surface is the orientation. Metaphorically, the core is the launching pad of intentions, desires, thoughts, energy, and emotions; the launching pad is not what is launched but without it, no launching would be possible. The surface is the actual launching

My first real insight into the somatic nature of fear came from Radix, a body-oriented form of education based on the work of Wilhelm Reich. I personally underwent this form of Reichian therapy for a number of years. I learned from my therapist that according to Chuck Kelly, the founder of Radix, a fear-structure is a soft structure. I also learned that the fear-type personality, in attempting to block fear from awareness, automatically blocks trust. As I thought about this observation and worked with my clients, I realized that the fear-structure is created very early in life and arises from a fundamental lack of trust. As is abundantly obvious, the hostility and anger of Marcie's mother was at the root of her lack of trust. When I realized that fear can be defined psychospacially as not wanting to be present and that fear and anxiety are different, I really began to understand the so-called fear-structure. Since Marcie's fear is actually defense against anxiety, it is misleading and simplistic to describe her merely as a fear-structure. Marcie's orientation is better described as a fear-anxiety structure.

For a person whose freedom was not compromised by abusive parents, fear normally would not become the collapse into formlessness. For such a person, if the object of fear were much more powerful than his or her ability to deal with it, he or she might exercise the option of running away or leaving the scene. If unable to run from the object of fear or if it was judged not to be much more than their ability to cope, the person might confront the dif-

ficulty head on. Before Rolfing, neither of these options were available to Marcie. Marcie's fear was a defense against anxiety, and her fear-anxiety complex had developed before she could walk, before she had her legs securely under her and her feet securely on the ground.

Fear that is not rooted in anxiety remains at the surface of the body-self. Since it remains at the surface, it does not disrupt the core or the place from which we orient toward reality. Since the core or the "launching pad" remains intact, it is still possible to orient appropriately, either toward or away from the object of fear. But Marcie's core was not secure. Her anxiety brought her face-to-face with the possibility of the dissolution of her self. It was next to impossible for Marcie to orient appropriately to her world during an anxiety attack. How, after all, do you relate or orient to a threat that has no spatial location, that seems to come at you from every direction, and that assaults the very essence of what you take to be your self?

Any number of incidents, which might seem trivial or mildly threatening to another person, could bring Marcie close to her anxiety. She would defend herself against anxiety by becoming fearful of some person or situation in her world. Fearful, soft formlessness was much easier for her to manage than vanishing into nothingness.

Since Marcie's core was not secure, she had no secure place from which to relate to her world. As a result, her relationships with others were shaky. I first described Marcie's body as too soft, but that description also is simplistic and incomplete. Actually, what was too soft was the surface musculature of her body; in contrast, her core was too tight and hard. Her body perfectly displayed the fear-anxiety structure of her self. She tried to ward off anxiety by going formless, soft, and fearful at the surface of her body-self, while hanging on for dear life at the level of her core.

Rolfing gave better form and structure to Marcie's body-self. As her surface became better differentiated from her core, her core

opened up and lengthened. As her legs came under her and she found her feet squarely on the ground, Marcie's life began to change. She looked for and got a good job which paid better, required regular hours, and demanded more interpersonal skills. She also started to study karate, which both enhanced and allowed her to use and experience her power and new sense of groundedness and core-surface integration. And she started straightening out some of the problems in her personal life that had developed over many years.

Willy

I see a lot of men and women in daily life and my Rolfing practice who manifest the same basic pattern of distress and misery that used to be Marcie's. Even though the details vary from person to person, once understood, this pattern is easy to recognize. Willy looked like a male version of Marcie. But added to his collapsed body, soft on the outside and tight and short on the inside, was scoliosis. Willy was a psychotherapist; he had worked on his problems for years and had his personal and professional life in good order. Unlike Marcie, he had a lot of skill and experience in dealing with his emotional issues when they surfaced and could usually integrate new insights rather quickly.

A year after he had completed his basic Rolfing, which usually consists of eight to twelve sessions, Willy came back for a series of three advanced sessions. It was obvious that his body had been permanently transformed for the better. The scoliosis was there, softer, less extreme, but still catching my eye. I designed his three advanced sessions, in part, around easing his curvature.

When he came for his second advanced session he told me that he had had a bizarre week: many strange dreams and some difficulty in relating to others. I explained that I had freed some of the surface layers of his body and had lengthened his core as part of my strategy for easing his scoliosis. I also explained the importance of the core and surface to his relationship to others and orientation

to the world. The work of the first advanced session had, indeed, decompensated his surface extrinsic musculature and had lengthened some of the intrinsic musculature of his core, but the work was by no means complete. The first session, by upsetting some of his compensations, had thrown him into the midst of what could be called his “facing” difficulties.

In ordinary speech we say things like, “I have to get my head on straight,” or “I’m going to deal with him face-to-face,” or “I don’t know if I can face this.” While not every person’s scoliosis is rooted in a facing problem, many of those I have worked with are. Like Marcie, Willy was very sensitive to the emotional states of others, which is partly what made him a good therapist. But unlike Marcie, he had a way of going into and exaggerating his curvature when he found himself in uncomfortable situations. Often when he sat or stood facing me, he twisted the upper part of his body so that he had to look at me from the corners of his eyes. I was reminded a bit of the many interviews of politicians I have watched on television: they never seem to be able to keep their heads straight and look directly into the camera when they are telling half-truths, avoiding issues, and putting up smokescreens. Conventionally, this is called “diplomacy.”

In Willy’s case, however, his turning away was how he dealt with a hostile and seductive mother as a child. I have noticed in my own case that when another person is trying to manipulate me, lying to me, or trying to convince me of something in which their own self-deception is involved, my response is to turn away. As a young child Willy did not have the option to completely turn away and leave the hostile, seductive space that his mother created. For better or worse, the mother is the child’s entire world for those first few years. Willy had to stay there in the negativity his mother generated in order to get whatever emotional and physical nourishment he could in order to survive and develop. Because it was too awful to face directly, Willy twisted away into a scoliosis.

When he arrived for his third session, Willy complained of a

headache but reported feeling somewhat better emotionally. I began his session by combining Rolfing with some subtle movement and facing exercises so that he could become more conscious of how he twisted away from the world. I had him exaggerate his twisting away and asked him to observe how the exaggeration felt when facing me. Then, I would do a little Rolfing to unwind the twist, and ask him to stand facing me again in order to feel what his new space felt like in relating to me. I also imitated his patterns of movements and twisting as he faced me. Willy understood the emotional meaning of twisting away and was able to drop it rather quickly. He said that he felt much clearer, more comfortable relating straight on, and that as he allowed his head to be straight, his headache began to ease.

There are many styles of warding off anxiety, of spatializing a defense against the threat of non-being. Not everybody defends against anxiety in the same way. Some people do it by becoming dense and slow on the outside and tight on the inside, others go rigid and hard, attempting to not feel their anxiety by mobilizing their anger and strutting through the world in a haughty, contemptuous way. Usually they block awareness of their anger and interpret their behavior as mere rational assertiveness. But those close to them know better. When we block our awareness of anger, we also block our ability to love.

Trudy

Trudy came to Rolfing after a number of years of psychotherapy. She and her therapist felt that Rolfing could help speed up her therapy, which had become bogged down. Her body was an odd mixture of a number of ways of spatializing and orienting. Her surface was dense, her core tight and short, and she had a mild scoliosis. She looked very confused in her eyes, blinked a lot, and had trouble looking at me when we talked. She held her mouth in a way that suggested she was holding back both tears and anger.

It was obvious that Trudy did not trust me or men in general. After a couple of sessions that took the lid off her sadness, it was clear why. As a child she felt invisible to her parents, as if they hardly even knew or cared whether she was there. In addition to making her feel invisible, they never protected her from her brothers who beat and tormented her whenever they got the chance.

Defined psychospatially, sadness is the loss of presence. If you love someone very deeply and he or she dies or leaves you, among all the emotions you will experience you will certainly feel sadness. When you love another person, you invest your ways of being present in his or her ways of being present. Your relationship, your ways of being present for each other and in each other, becomes a dimension of your being present in the world. Even in an unhealthy relationship, where neither partner is appropriately present in crucial ways for each other, the relationship becomes part of how they orient toward the world. Loss of love, then, is loss of presence. When you lose the reciprocity of presence between you and your lover, you lose that dimension of your relationship to the world that grew naturally from your relationship to your loved one. Psychospatially, this is another way of saying that when you lose someone you love you feel like you have lost a part of yourself.

Unlike Marcie who did not want to be present, Trudy desperately wanted to be present. It is normal and necessary for a child's developing sense of self or being present that her parents are there for her in a loving way. Because her parents were not, and did not even protect her against her brothers' assaults on her presence, Trudy felt invisible, as if she had never been seen for herself. As a result, she was desperate to *be*.

Before beginning therapy and Rolfing, she effectively blocked her awareness of sadness, her loss of presence, by making her surface dense. Unfortunately, blocking sadness automatically serves to block the joy of life. And the joy of life is at the heart of everything that lives. Defined psychospatially, joy is the exuberance over simply being present. Trudy's density was the armor she needed to

protect herself from her brothers, from her anxiety, and to block awareness of her sadness. Her sadness was more accessible to her and much easier for her to deal with than the anxiety at the core of her existence. In response to her anxiety, the muscles and fasciae of her core were short and tight.

Trudy's density also served another important and absolutely vital function in her life. It was her overdetermined, compensatory, and desperate way of being present on her own. In order for a child to develop a healthy self, to come to herself as a healthy free-standing individual being, she needs in her parents a kind of loving mirror. Children love to rattle on and on about themselves, their projects, their likes and dislikes, about this and that, always *showing* themselves to their parents in their joyful exuberance over simply being here. They manifest themselves, their being-here, through all their endless activities in the mirror of parental love in order to see themselves and finally be able to stand freely as themselves. Since there was no proper mirror of love for Trudy, she had to become present on her own. What should have been a normal developmental sequence resulting in a independent free-standing body-self produced instead a confused and anxious body-self desperately needing and wanting to become present. Thus, she overdetermined being present by densifying her body. Her density was the result of tensing her surface musculature in a desperate attempt to force herself to be here. Her body said, "Look at me, I am not invisible. I am here!"

At first we both thought tensing her body was a form of resistance, especially to the Rolfing. Soon, however, it became clear that it was part of her desperate need to be. Not surprisingly, she said she was afraid to let go of it for fear that she would become a "blob." She said that this strategy of tensing her whole body for the purpose of being seen felt like she had taken amphetamines, and that she had trouble coming down at night. This is not surprising—the feeling of "coming down" or becoming a blob meant not being able to be present at all. Trudy experienced letting go of

the tensing of her body as the threat of non-being which is the essence of anxiety.

Although she did not fully understand it at the time, she was fascinated with my paraphrase of Merleau-Ponty's claim that sanity is guaranteed not by reality-testing, but by the structure of one's space. She was also intrigued with my comment that we can become ultimately responsible for how we live our own space. Whether or not she could conceptualize what I said in her own words was not of prime importance, however.

When she stood up after her tenth Rolfing session, it was perfectly obvious that she had embodied this understanding. Her core had opened up, her surface had lost much of its density, her eyes had lost much of their confusion and were bright and clear, and she was smiling.

During the tenth session she had a lot to tell me. She said she was finally working at the job she had trained for in college and that she loved her work. Because of the Rolfing she was more trusting of men and now, a couple of years after a difficult marriage and painful divorce, she was looking forward to a relationship with a man. She also said she used to hate being alone but now she really appreciated and enjoyed the time she could spend by herself. Being alone no longer meant being lonely to her. And best of all, she said she was truly happy. The sadness, the loss of presence that she had been blocking all her life was dissolving. In its place she was just beginning to experience the joy of life, the exuberance of being present.

Core Conflicts

We all orient in space-time and organize our bodies in our own unique ways. Some of these ways are healthy and some are not. But no matter how complex the conflicted psychospacial orientations are, they very often share a common core conflict, which can be described as a tight or hard core. More times than not, a hard core

is a defense against anxiety. A far less common core conflict, but one that I have seen quite a number of times, is a soft core. A person with a soft core experiences an almost nonexistent sense of inner identity. Since these people do not have any adequate place from which to orient to the world, they do not have any clear sense of who they are and what they are supposed to be doing here. As a result, they are easily buffeted about and influenced by the desires of others.

Without any center of gravity or inner sense of what is appropriate for their own way of being, they are at the mercy of the standards of others. In fact, because their core is too soft and they do not have an adequate place from which to orient toward their world, they are compelled to take on other people's orientations as their own. Without an adequate inner standard of their own, they tend to adopt the standards of others as a substitute for their undeveloped core. This masquerade becomes their only way of being able to be here, and they then live this substitution at their surface. But substituting the surface orientations of others for one's lack of a core is to take what is essentially alien and other as oneself. Thus, who they are becomes alien, even to themselves.

Soft-core people tend to adopt and copy other people's ways of being present the way someone might put on a costume or mask. The difference, however, is that such people feel, to themselves and to others who are sensitive, almost as if no one is there under the mask. Since copying the psychospacial orientations of others is their only way of getting through life, they tend to appear mechanical and unreal. They also hang on to their surface orientations tightly and as a result, their surface tends to be too hard. They often shed and adopt many surface orientations throughout their lives. The process of shedding and adopting new forms is always a difficult and painful time, because during these transitions they are brought dangerously close to their own inner emptiness. Since at the core level they have no defense against anxiety, they are always on the edge of losing themselves.

I have heard other therapists claim that soft-core people tend to obscure the meaning of what is happening around them when the going gets tough. But actually, emotionally-charged situations do not really elicit in these people the tendency to obscure meaning—as if obscuring meaning were some sort of defense mechanism. Rather, when life gets difficult, their substitute surface orientations are incapable of providing them with the necessary resources with which to deal with their situations. As a result, they are left with no adequate place from which to orient toward what is happening. With no place from which to orient and with their substitute surface orientations crumbling during emotionally-charged situations, it is no wonder that meaning becomes obscure. They are not defending themselves by obscuring meaning; they are sinking into the quicksand of nothingness.

There is one last core conflict that I want to describe here. This conflicted mode of being is sometimes misperceived at first as a variation in soft-core or fear-anxiety orientations, but it really goes much deeper. This pervasive core conflict is one in which the person experiences a fundamental and grievous lack that exists like a dreaded abyss at the very heart of all their experiences. This conflict is actually not a conflict in the core, but rather the experience of having no core at all.

As we shall see in Chapter Five, the core can be objectified and described anatomically. Thus, to say that a person has no core does not mean that she has an anatomical abnormality, but that her core is nonfunctional in her relationships with others. Having no core means that she never developed a deep inner sense of identity and selfhood and that she never developed a place from which to orient. As a result, all of her orientations proceed from a deep inner sense of vacancy. In contrast, a soft-core person has a somewhat functional core which implies that they have the potential to develop a more normal and appropriate relationship to self and world. But a no-core person never developed a core at all and does not even grasp what is missing. During infancy and all through childhood,

the no-core person experiences such a devastating attack on and rejection of her presence that she was never able to get her bearings from her parents. As a result, such a person was forced to grow and mature without any place from which to orient and without any sense of what her identity consisted in.

I wish to avoid psychological labels in this book, but here it is important to realize that what I am calling a no-core conflict is traditionally termed “schizophrenia.” As Binswanger points out, the schizophrenic is in the horrible existential contradiction of simultaneously not wanting to be who he is and desperately wanting to be who he is.¹ His very survival in childhood demanded his coming into agreement with his parents’ total and complete rejection of his developing body-self. Because he becomes congruent with the total rejection of himself and lives it completely, he never develops a core. Throughout his life, he puts on an inauthentic, poorly functioning surface self in place of his missing sense of selfhood. Since he is always precariously balanced on the brink, his inauthentic surface self is always desperately attempting not to fall into the dread of his own nothingness.

Binswanger observes that the schizophrenic has lost his very ground in the search for himself. But because the schizophrenic has never even developed his own core and innermost sense of who he is, it is not quite accurate to say that he has “lost his ground” because he cannot lose what he never had. Lacking a core, he has no centerline around which and from which his actions, energies, intentions, and desires can be appropriately oriented or organized. As a result, all of his interactions are peculiar, uncanny, oddly inappropriate, and seeming to proceed from an inner vacancy. Unlike the fear-anxiety person who does not want to be present, the no-core person is completely unable to know what being present is. Having no core is neither the refusal or desire not to be here; it is, rather, not knowing where “here” is.

As Ron Kurtz points out, the schizoid’s body looks imploded.² The tissue at every level is tight, hard, and unyielding. Their eyes

seem to look through you and into a distance; they look but never seem to see. Such a person often has a strange light in and around their eyes as if their eyes were overflowing with too much uncontained light. The very attempt to make full, authentic human contact, either through words or touch, seems to send them ricocheting off a momentarily shared point of contact to another standpoint. If you move to their new standpoint they immediately jump to another standpoint, and so on. Every interaction seems to fail or miss in a peculiar way, like extending your right hand to shake hands with someone and having the other person offer the back of their left hand to you. You somehow make some sort of contact and yet never really touch.

Having no core means having no sense of one's own identity and having no place from which to orient and relate appropriately to others. Because he has no deep abiding sense of who he is, the no-core person has trouble distinguishing between feelings and energies that belong to him and what belongs to others. What you are feeling, he may think are his feelings. Since he lives in rejection of his innermost self, he often misperceives the movements of his own energies and feelings as something external that is attacking or influencing him. My experience with George, described in Chapter One, is a good example of the difficulties involved in being with a no-core person.

The no-core person, having no centerline around which to organize his perceptions and from which to orient toward the world, frequently has problems and difficulties with being present. Their manner and mode of occupying space is always somewhat uncanny and inappropriate. Their psychospacial orientation says, "I don't know where *here* is."

Elaine

As I was writing this chapter, I realized that I wanted to describe an experience which manifested more of the spiritual dimensions

of transformation. As I was trying to decide who to use as an example, Elaine came for her eighth session. She said there was so much going on in her life because of the Rolfing and that she needed to talk to me about it. I was deeply moved by what she told me. A few times as the tears pooled in her eyes I was also close to tears. The next day when I sat down to write, I wished I had tape-recorded our session. I realized the next best thing would be to ask her to write it out for me. But before I had a chance to ask her to do this, she appeared for her ninth session with four typewritten pages describing her experience of Rolfing. We both laughed when I told her that I was about to ask her to do exactly what she had already done.

If most people were to look at Elaine before her Rolfing, they would probably not see any reason for her to get Rolfed. She appeared to stand beautifully straight without being hypererect. She was an extremely competent, intelligent and sensitive person who apparently had her professional and personal life in good order. I noticed, however, that while her core was more open and free than most people, her surface was much too rigid. The rigidity of her surface hemmed in and impinged on her core, suggesting a disparity between her innermost self and what she could manifest of it in the world. I knew that I had to get more space available for her core. By the end of the seventh session, we had accomplished this goal. For various reasons, I did not see her for the eighth session until about two months later. What follows is part of Elaine's own description of what happened to her after seven sessions of Rolfing:

In my case, I came to Rolfing with a body that had endured a bad marriage, a resentment-filled divorce, several career crises, and a near-fatal auto accident seven years prior. The body spoke eloquently of these things by a chronic sinus condition, nagging back aches, and an occasional muscle spasm across the shoulders. On a more subtle level, there was also a persistent inability to swallow, fleeting anxiety flutters in the region of the heart, and annoyingly

regular colds. Despite all of this, I held the belief that I was quite healthy: in other words, I simply wasn't listening to my body. The voice it had fell on deaf ears. My intellect routinely overrode the messages of imbalance my body communicated.

In retrospect, I have come to realize that I, like so many other of my contemporaries, did not know my body, did not fully trust it, and, most certainly, did not live in it. I was almost entirely an intellect, residing in a system that I placed in low regard. The body was devalued and dishonored by neglect.

Each person's body, it seems, contains an emotional blueprint and a spiritual map for that lifetime. Certain goals and principles are expressed in the physical form taken and shaped over time. To work with the body, then, is to touch the past, the present, and the future simultaneously. Memories of the life that was and dreams of that yet to come dance wistfully on the fingertips of the Rolfer. At times, waves of emotions swirl and abound as the tissue is touched and changed. In the hands of the Rolfer lies the Universe, contained in the body of a single human being. Each cell beats with a life force composed of energy, rhythm, and sensation. Such work is sacred, as holy as the miracles of scripture and history recorded in the days of the Ancients. For here, in this body, resides God, and Spirit, and Oneness.

I was unprepared for that knowledge when, in one lengthy session, I witnessed a white shaft, tube-like, a tunnel of light arising from within me and emerging out of my head, expanding further and further beyond me. It drifted higher and higher, seemingly reaching for the sky, all the while stretching effortlessly from my physical self, connecting me to the vast unseen. I dubbed it my "holy spirit," and felt such peace and elation as I had ever felt. My sense, then and now, is that it was a unified vision arising spontaneously from the release of energy, previously blocked from expression. Held trapped in a body harnessed with trauma and memories, this knowledge was kept prisoner in my body, locked away from my awareness. Once released, it beat a gentle pulsation, and danced a joyful, soaring dance into timelessness. With that vision has come a sense of the unity and grace of our reality, and lifetimes, and existences.

With that vision has gone the fear and aching anxiety of the Void, for now purposefulness is known and embraced.

The Rolfer acts as a conduit for the spirit in body so that it might align itself with the life path and goal of the person being Rolfed. Restoring the means of expression so that energies might flow freely, cutting away restrictive ties, loosening tight restraints on a muscular level, s/he works to create lightness. This lightness I feel on multiple levels: in my physical sense as I move, in my emotions as I feel graced by the depths of my feeling states, and, spiritually, as I capture a vision of the truer reality of my own world of experience. I am light, lighter, and lightness itself.

Rolfing is a transformative process; I have been changed by the experience. Not only do I sense my world more acutely, but I envision more elaborately, as well. I have an intensified feeling about such things as honesty and deception. I tolerate less easily the day-to-day idiotic dances of illusion most of us endure for sheer survival. I suspect that I will leave behind the willingness to “make do” and replace it with a desire to expand the self that I now know to be truly limitless.

I believe that the mind exists throughout the body; we think with our whole selves, not just in the brain. We are an energy field, a living, breathing Universe. The wonder of it fills me with a sense of the miraculous. I live my body now with a fascination born of new insights. I revere the holistic human being I am with a grateful heart; I have found a transcendent self only hinted at in earlier living.

The future unfolds itself within me; the past resides more amiably now with my present self. Integration is continuing and my spirit self has married my mind and heart; it is a joyful union!

There is so much I am tempted to say in response to Elaine's description; I especially want to neither exaggerate nor minimize the import of her experience. It is clear that Elaine has just begun to reach into the spiritual root of her life. She was obviously not a stranger to spiritual work before Rolfing; but most of her growth had occurred at the psychological, emotional, and intuitive levels.

Her experience of the tunnel of light, which she appropriately called her “holy spirit,” is an experience of her core being set free from the painful injured rigidity of her surface. In freeing her core from the limitations of her surface, Rolfing gave Elaine the opportunity to experience an aspect of her true self freed from the fetters of her ego-self. Since the core is at one level the true self, and at another level the event of appropriate relationship, it is only natural and right that the experience of her true self standing in spacious unity with *this* is also the experience of peace and joy, which is simply the natural condition of unfettered existence.

Most transforming experiences demand a radical and often painful reorientation and restructuring of one’s life at every level. Without any such reorientation, the insights and freedom gained will evaporate as the old patterns of misery, denial, and avoidance of relationship reestablish themselves. As a result of the experience of her holy spirit, Elaine’s personal life was turned upside down and cooked in the fires of transformation. She spent two difficult months between this experience and her eighth Rolfing session. During this time she began putting her life into the order that her experience of the holy spirit required. And she has continued on this path since her tenth Rolfing session.

As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the unexamined metaphysics that dominates Western culture is dualistic and mechanistic. As a result, many of us are not free enough to properly understand descriptions like Elaine’s and are likely to experience them as hopelessly vague or at best as a “poetic” fantasy. Because too many of us still live and believe the Platonic view of the body as the prisonhouse of the soul, we find it difficult to understand how spiritual transformation demands and *is* bodily transformation. But there is no getting around it—spiritual transformation *is* the transformation of the space-time we are and can never take place apart from this lived space-time.

So many spiritual traditions, East and West, extol the virtues of searching for the true self, but few recognize and a great many

ignore or deny the body's role in transformation. Loosely speaking, the core or true self faces two directions at once; one is personal, oriented toward the ego-self and its fixations with the human world. The other is impersonal and selfless, oriented toward the spacious groundless-ground of *this*. In between the allowing openness that sees itself as all of this and the ego-self lost in its own fixations, compulsions, and separation, is the true self or the core. Some call it the Atman or the Witness, others call it Christ-consciousness. But whatever it is called, it is a psychospacial, psychotemporal event, and glimpses of it such as Elaine experienced mark not the goal of spiritual work, but its beginning.

Because the core or true self faces two directions, one toward the ego-self and one toward *that* which is not a self at all, it can be experienced in a number of different ways—physically, psychologically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. One of my clients spoke of his experience this way, “I met myself and I like who I am.” On a deeper level, Elaine described it thus: “My spirit self has married my mind and heart.”

Elaine's statement is interesting at another level—it sounds like it could have come from an old philosophical alchemy text. As far as I know, the alchemists were the only ones within Western tradition to have understood that spiritual transformation *is* bodily transformation. At one level, transforming lead into gold symbolizes the metasomatoses of spiritual work. Being able to make gold meant that one had realized the true self, or the *vir unus* as it was sometimes called. This realization was also called variously the attainment of the philosopher's stone, the *unio mystica* and the “Chymical Wedding.” The Alchemystical Wedding was the creation of a completed, unified human being in whom the spirit had married mind (soul) with heart (body). Without any prior knowledge of alchemy, Elaine used language an alchemist would have understood to describe her first taste of the spiritual side of her core. Out of her own experience she clearly understood that the body is the very space through which we become who we are. She

also experienced the temporal nature of transformation, which is the subject of Chapter Six.

Notes

1. See, for example, Ludwig Binswanger's article "The Case of Ellen West," in *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology*, edited by Rollo May (New York: Basic Books, 1958), pp. 297–298.
2. Ron Kurtz, *Hakomi Therapy* (Boulder, Colorado: Hakomi Institute, 1985). See especially Chapters 20 and 21.

CHAPTER THREE

Oriented Space

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER, I illustrated the psychospatial reality of the self by describing various dimensions of the transformational process in some of my Rolfing clients. The experiences described stand in marked contrast to the prevailing metaphysics of our culture, a metaphysics I am tempted to call the “metaphysics of disease.” These experiences demonstrate that any attempt to imagine the human self as other than and separable from its living spatial matrix is a philosophical fiction and the expression of psychological distress. In this chapter, I want to flesh out in more detail the structure of this psychospatial reality.

Of all the creatures on this earth, human beings seem to be the only ones to have created a self. It is the source of both the greatest cultural achievements and of the greatest horrors. The self allows us to separate from the living totality in which we exist. Through separation and reflection, we split unified experience asunder into an objective world of things that can be thought about and manipulated by this separate subjective self.

Yet if you look at the human world with the eyes of innocence, immaculately and without judgment, you will easily see that this self, created in instinct and so laboriously maintained, dies into oblivion thousands of times every day. Driving around town in your car is a wonderful way to watch this process of death and rebirth.

Stopped at a red light, there in the car next to you, a man looks into infinity as he picks his nose. In the car on the other side, a woman's breath almost ceases as she quietly falls into nowhere. Two seconds after the light changes, someone impatiently hits his horn. Startled, the woman's car lurches forward as she speeds away in embarrassment. Angrily, but with Zen-like finesse, the man abruptly removes his middle finger from his nose and uses it to make an obscene gesture. Once again the self has been reborn.

Over and over again a process of death and resurrection happens in all of us. Once in a great while someone's self dies what Buddhists call the "Great Death" and in the subsequent resurrection, the whole being emerges transformed. Occasionally in this process, aspects of one's neurotic, conflicted ego-self die, never to be resurrected again, and body and self emerge transformed. But more often that not, this process goes unnoticed and no fundamental transformation occurs.

Prereflection and Reflection

To facilitate understanding of how this process occurs and the nature and origin of the self, I want to use, for my own purposes, a distinction from the phenomenological tradition. Generally, most phenomenologists agree that two modes of consciousness can be distinguished: the prereflective and the reflective. In the description above of the man and woman at a stoplight, I have already given an example of these two modes of consciousness. Before the light changed, the consciousness of both were oriented prereflectively. When the man turned and made his angry, obscene gesture and the woman sped away in embarrassment, they both were probably in the reflective mode.

But let me offer another example to explain this distinction. Suppose you are mowing your grass with a power mower. As you work, you may have noticed there are moments and sometimes long periods of time in which you are completely unified with your

task. There is no thought: "I am mowing," there is just the activity of mowing itself. You do not feel yourself separate from the mower and the work at hand; the experience of yourself as separate and other from them simply does not arise. This purposeful activity of mowing without there being an "I" that mows is the pre-reflective mode of consciousness.

Now suppose the mower hits a large piece of metal causing the blade to break. At first, still in the prereflective mode, you will likely be startled. When you recover yourself, you might say something like, "Damn! Now I'll never get this grass mowed in time." But notice the change in your orientation toward the mower as you bemoan your situation. After you realize the mower is broken, you are no longer unified with it and the task at hand—you have stepped back out of the flow of prereflective experience. Thinking about how to deal with your situation, you now stand separate from your mower in the reflective mode of consciousness.

When you step out of the flow of prereflective or lived experience, you reflect on or think about your experience. When this happens, your prereflective lived-through experience falls apart and you become a subjective entity that is thinking about an object. The word "object" means literally "that which is thrown before." The German word for "object," *Gegenstand*, is also interesting in this context. It means "that which stands over and against." And the word "subject" means literally "that which is thrown under." These words express rather well what happens when we move from the prereflective to the reflective mode of consciousness. When the mower breaks, your unified lived experience and purposeful activity also fall apart. The mower is "thrown before" you as something that stands apart from you; it has become an object demanding your attention. In the very same moment that you objectify the mower (turn it into an object to be thought about), you become the subject that is thinking about and is caught in the dominion of the object. As soon as the world, or any part of it is experienced objectively, that is, as an object, you simultaneously come to presence as

a subject that apprehends reality objectively. Subject and object arise together and mutually implicate each other in the reflective mode of consciousness.

When the mower is fixed and you return once again to mowing the lawn, you return to the unified prereflective experience, usually without noticing it. Throughout our lives we move continuously back and forth from the prereflective to the reflective.

Consider another example: as you are reading this book, you would probably give no thought to the fact that you are reading. But now that I have pointed this out to you, you are probably thinking about the fact that you are reading this book. Now as you read this reference to the fact that you are reading, it usually becomes difficult if not impossible to be thinking about the fact that you are reading as you read. Before I brought your attention to your reading, you were reading prereflectively. Perhaps you stopped reading as you thought about and reflected on what you were reading and on the fact that you were reading. In thinking about what you were reading you turned this book into an object and you became a subject. In so doing, you separated yourself from the flow of reading, oriented yourself reflectively, and became a subject who objectified this book.

If you are understanding what you are reading, you will probably and for the most part remain in the prereflective mode. But if something does not make sense or if suddenly you understand an idea in a way that is new and exciting to you, you will separate yourself from the flow of prereflective understanding and reflect on what you just read. You may think, "I don't understand this," or "Yeah, I've experienced that." Most of the time when you move to the reflective, the word "I" will appear somewhere in your thoughts or verbal expression. The appearance of the word "I" is not essential to reflective consciousness, but it does indicate how reflective consciousness always marks the appearance of the subject who reflects on an objective world.

The prereflective/reflective distinction is not a psychological

distinction, nor is it the same as or meant to replace the unconscious/conscious distinction of psychology. As I understand it, what we call the unconscious is that aspect of prereflective experience about which we are either self-deceived or unskilled at bringing to reflective awareness.

In self-deception, we reflectively misinterpret our motives to ourselves and others and call them something they are not. I know parents, for example, who spank, hit, criticize and belittle their children excessively. They would very likely become angered if I said that I thought they emotionally and physically abused their children. When they reflect on how they treat their children, they utter clichés like “Spare the rod, spoil the child,” or rationalize that “It’s for their own good” or “It’s a tough world and I’m teaching my kids how to deal with it now!” Most of these parents were treated the same way by their parents. A psychologist might say that they are unconsciously acting out what was done to them. Because the forces that are determining their behavior are unconscious, they do not realize what they are doing to their children. I would agree, but add that the unconscious as I understand it is not some sort of unknowable container in the mind full of forces and ideas that can only be known in its unhealthy effects. The unconscious is simply those aspects of prereflective experience that for many reasons we want to reflectively misinterpret to ourselves. So an abusive parent might say, “I don’t abuse my children, I am disciplining them for their own good,” even when such “discipline” entails slapping them on the face, hitting them on the head from behind when they don’t expect it, constantly belittling them, or taking a belt to their bare backs and bottoms.

Prereflective experience, then, includes and is a much larger field of awareness than what is called the unconscious. This point applies equally to Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious. With practice and intuitive skill we can learn to properly interpret reflectively those aspects of the prereflective that Jung called archetypes.

One of the more insidious biases of Western culture is to see the

reflective mode of consciousness as the *only* mode of understanding there is. In fact, until the birth of phenomenology, Western philosophy mistakenly considered the essence of all thinking and understanding to be reflective. But, as we have just seen, there are in reality two ways in which thinking, consciousness, awareness, or understanding can be oriented: prereflectively and reflectively.

Indeed, some of our most highly-prized human activities are undermined if too much reflection is involved. Consider the inspired performance of a piece of music, the moment of inspiration in which the solution to a scientific problem emerges full-blown, the appreciation of nature in which you feel “lost” to the beauty before you, or the one-pointed intensity experienced by an athlete as he scores the winning point in the final seconds of a game.

If you reflect too much or at the wrong time in any of these activities, your experience of freedom falls apart and is lost. If an athlete reflectively thinks, “Great, I will now score the winning point,” he probably won’t. The musician’s performance will lose its inspired quality if she reflects on how well she is playing. With too much reflection, the scientist could lose the thread of the solution that is unfolding through him. The immediate experience of natural beauty will die in our attempt to comment on it.

Prereflection is a form of understanding. It is also the prior condition of reflective understanding. Prereflection is also an orientation, a capacity for experiencing reality without separating from it. Reflection is an orientation, a capacity for experiencing reality by separating from it. Reflection splits unified experience apart into subject and object; prereflection is unification, an understanding that participates in that which is understood. Reflection is separation, an understanding that steps back from and out of unified experience, splitting it into a subject who thinks about an object.

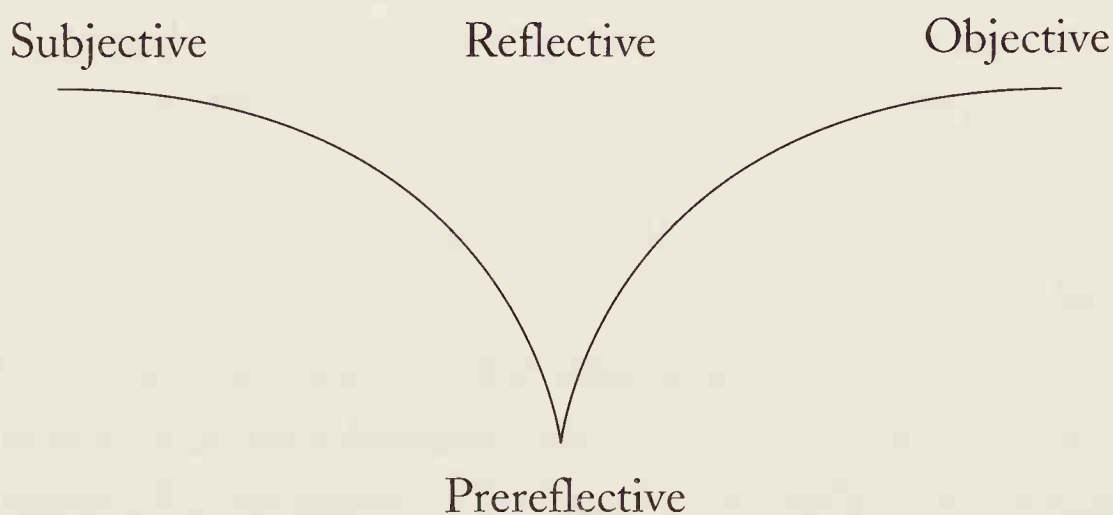
Unless the world were already opened up to us prereflectively, there would be nothing to step back from and reflect on. All theory, whether scientific or speculative, is an attempt to understand reality reflectively, and as such it is ultimately grounded in and

dependent upon how the world is already opened up to us in pre-reflective understanding.

As I have already pointed out, the bias of Western culture holds that reflective understanding is the only legitimate form of understanding there is. This prejudice mindlessly relegates all prereflective experience to the subjective because it assumes that whatever is not objective is necessarily subjective. Prereflective understanding should not be reduced to the subjective, but seen as a form of understanding that participates with that which is understood. Not only is it a form of understanding, it is also the prior ground or condition of both the subjective and the objective. The reflective experience of subject and object comes into being at the very moment we step out of the flow of prereflective lived experience and begin to think about what we are experiencing.

In the above examples, we would be hard-pressed to convince the scientist, the musician, or the nature lover that they were not understanding because they were not reflectively understanding. For example, consider the miraculous ability of human vision. With it we either can stand back from the world and turn it into a collection of objects, or, like lovers gazing into one another's eyes, we can enter and participate in what we see. It is telling that we recognize carnal knowledge as "knowledge." And, as everyone should know, orgasm and reflection do not mix.

The following diagram is a useful way of displaying the relationship between the prereflective and the reflective:



I plan to use the prereflective/reflective distinction in a number of different ways throughout this book. In this chapter, the distinction will be useful toward understanding the nature, origin, and development of the psychospatial unity we call the self. The infant is not born into the world with a self. The infant comes into the world as a pre-personal, will-less, undifferentiated spatiality. Selfhood, in fact, is a developmental task that takes years to complete. As we shall see, the self grows and develops as the capacity for reflection grows and develops.

Intentionality

However, before I can articulate the origin and structure of the self, I must articulate another concept from phenomenology. The concept I want to use and expand is "intentionality."

The mechanistic or causal theory of perception urges us to understand the senses as passive receivers of incoming data. In opposition to this view of perception, phenomenologists are quick to point out that an essential structure of our being is intentionality. We are much less passive receivers of incoming data and much more actively reaching out to understand and grasp the world around us. Intentionality is an orientation toward and opening onto the world. It is always directing itself toward and being solicited by the world. Phenomenologists tend to state this intentional capacity of consciousness by saying, "Consciousness is always the consciousness of something." As we shall see, reducing intentionality to a form of consciousness is quite misleading. It fails to grasp the somatic nature of intentionality. Intentionality is more than just a form of consciousness. It is a psychospatial and psychotemporal orientation which is always directing itself toward and being solicited by a world.

The psychological and philosophical concepts of intention are not the same. Intentionality is an essential structure of every form of consciousness. The intention to do something, therefore, is just

one example or kind of intentionality. According to phenomenology, any form of consciousness you can imagine is a form of intentionality. Daydreaming, anger, fear, sadness, lust, problem-solving, hope, faith, charity, forgiveness, feelings, negotiation, abstract thinking (indeed all forms of thinking), gardening, perception, and so on, are all forms of intentionality.

Every time you try to describe some form of consciousness, notice how a preposition turns up in your description. In saying, "I am angry *at* you," or "I am happy *for* you," or "I am afraid *of* guns," or "I am thinking *about* her," or "I am not sure *of* all the implications of the proposition," the placement of the preposition usually indicates a form of intentionality. The preposition displays the way in which consciousness is oriented toward reality and that consciousness is already embedded in a context. Consciousness is always the consciousness *of* something.

Imagine that you are looking at a flower. You can distinguish two sides to this situation: your consciousness and the flower. If you are studying the flower as a botanist, the flower becomes an object to be classified or analyzed, and your consciousness is in the reflective mode. If you are lost in its beauty, the flower is no longer an object but a wondrous bursting-forth of color and life in which you are participating, and your consciousness is in the prereflective mode.

Depending upon what sort of thing you are looking at and whether you are objectifying it in reflection or participating with it in prereflection, your orientation will be correspondingly different. The prepositions that occur in your descriptions of experience, ("I was overwhelmed *by* its beauty") indicate that you are embedded in and actively engaged in many ways and at many levels with the world.

The prereflective absorption and participation with beauty is obviously different from the prereflective intentionality involved in witnessing an automobile accident. The reflective understanding involved in classifying a flower is quite different from reflect-

ing on and reporting an accident hours after it has occurred. The way in which you are oriented toward reality depends upon the nature of that toward which you are orienting (a flower or an automobile accident) and whether you are orienting reflectively or prereflectively. Each of these ways of orienting is a kind of intentionality.

Fundamentally, intentionality is a multifaceted orientation to and engagement with the world. However, given that the self is a bodily psychospatial reality, the concept of intentionality must include more than what is commonly called consciousness. Because of our philosophical tradition, when we hear the word "consciousness" we most often think of a non-bodily, non-spatial, self-reflexive, isolated, private, mental phenomenon. If intentionality is a structure of consciousness and consciousness is seen as something non-bodily, the concept is not broad enough to encompass the psychospatial unity of the self. To be useful, intentionality must be understood as a bodily psychospatial orientation to and engagement with the world.

What we call consciousness is not something non-bodily and private, but very much a spatial, bodily orientation toward and engagement with the world. Intentionality is a way of being present: a way of occupying space and a way of spatializing intentions, purposes, energies, and desires. Self and body cannot be separated and the very nature of our being-in-the-world is a directing-itself-toward.

If you want to understand the full reality of your bodily being, you cannot approach it through reflection alone nor can you objectify it as a mere thing among the other things of the objective world. Your body is not a thing that you own or inhabit; rather it is the prereflective lived-condition for owning and inhabiting things. For certain purposes you can reflectively view your body as a thing which takes up measurable space. But this sort of consideration is a reflective abstraction that does not even begin to touch the heart of your bodily being. We do not simply take up measurable space

like a mere thing, we occupy, orient, and come to presence as a lived-space. Our bodily being is already, prior to all our attempts to think about who and what we are, intentionally structured: psychospatially and psychotemporally directing itself toward a world.

When I say that the body is a psychospatial orientation, I am not referring to either objective or subjective space. I am, rather, referring to prereflective lived-space. When we think about space, most people tend to think about objective space, which is usually understood as measurable space. The distance between two points or two towns, volumetric space, the space represented in a Cartesian coordinate system or on a blueprint, are all examples of measurable space. Our biomedical and biological sciences conceive of the body as a soft machine that takes up measurable space. For certain purposes this objectification is certainly useful. But no one who is alive and well can seriously believe that our bodies are simply and ultimately machines that take up objective space.

We come to presence spatially. We orient in and as lived-space. Lived-space and objective space are not the same. Unlike things and machines which take up measurable objective space, we *occupy* space. Some people occupy lived-space with such presence that they become charismatic leaders. Others' shriveled lived-space manifests an almost unnoticeable presence: we sometimes say of another person that he is not all *there*. These descriptions are not about objective space, but they are not descriptions of subjective space either. They are descriptions of lived-space. Fixated in the subject-object distinction, we mistakenly assume that whatever is not objective must therefore be subjective. But lived-space is neither objective nor subjective space.

In reflection, objective space and subjective space arise together and mutually implicate each other. Objective space is measurable space. It is a way to reflectively objectify space as we live it. Subjective space concerns all our images, feelings, and judgments about the space we live. Perhaps you think your body is too big or too small or ugly in some way. Some spaces you enjoy occupying and

others you do not. They seem to hem you in and make you feel ill at ease. How you feel about space as you live it (both your body-space and the spaces you occupy and inhabit), the private images you have about lived-space, and your judgments about whether your lived-space is good or bad, constitute the subjective experience of space.

The subjective and objective experiences of space arise together and at once in reflection. Reflective considerations of space are ways of objectifying and subjectifying the prereflective experience of lived-space. The prereflective experience of lived-space is neither subjective nor objective. It is the ground of and presupposed in any subjective or objective approach to space. The space we step out of and consider reflectively is the space we live prereflectively. Space as it is lived in prereflection is lived-space.

Your lived-body-space is not ultimately a mere thing that takes up measurable space, although for certain purposes it can be construed in that way by reflection. Your lived-body-space is a psychospacial orientation, a spatialized intentionality, a way of coming to presence, a way of occupying, inhabiting, and organizing space, a way of spatializing intentions, purposes, energies, and desires. Fundamentally, intentionality is a psychospacial orientation to and engagement with the world, a way of being bodily toward and with the world.

Emotions are a fascinating example of intentionality. Our culture tends to consider feelings and emotions as irrational and disturbing forces best ignored or denied. For the metaphysical dualist who believes that mind and body are distinct and separate things, emotions and feelings are difficult to classify because they seem to be related to both the body and the mind. Emotions and feelings seem like disturbing bodily processes that are as much out of one's conscious control as a toothache. Yet, without wanting to fully admit it, we recognize that in some sense we are responsible for our emotional states in ways that we are not for our toothaches. Emotions obviously affect the body in profound ways, throwing

us into a whirlpool of feelings we don't seem to understand any better than some of our disease states. At the same time, however, we clearly recognize how people use their emotions to manipulate others. This recognition suggests that emotions share features of or may be an aspect of consciousness.

Our culture is thoughtlessly attracted to giving reductive, causal explanations of emotions. But there is a world of difference between emotions and the kinds of bodily states that can be understood causally. If you step barefoot on a nail, it will definitely cause you pain. You may get angry with your friend for leaving the nail in your path. Strictly speaking, however, your friend is not the cause of your anger in the same sense that the nail is the cause of your pain. You may say, "You are the cause of my anger!" but the word "cause" here really means that your friend is the *reason* for your anger.

Anger is a form of intentionality; the pain of stepping on a nail is not. You can say, "I am angry *at* you," "I am angry *about* your repeated carelessness," "I am fed up *with* you," and so on, indicating how you are oriented toward your friend at that moment. But notice it does not make much sense to say, "I am pained *over* (or *at*, or *about*) the nail." You would not be at all inclined to state your pain this way. Also, with anger you have a choice that you don't have with pain: you do not have to feel angry, and, in fact, you may not. But normally, you don't have the choice not to feel pain when you step on a nail.

Like pain, some emotions and feelings can seem to come from nowhere, threatening to overwhelm consciousness. Saying, "He was so angry, he was fit to be tied!" expresses this well. But actually, it is only our reflective consciousness that is overwhelmed by emotion. In a moment of intense anger your entire body-self is in a turmoil, and you cannot coldly analyze and objectify your situation. Prereflectively, you are given over to your anger and its orientation toward your friend. Emotions are not experienced reflectively. Since we are encouraged by our culture to deny and suppress our feelings and our bodies, and because emotions are so obviously

a bodily affair, many of us view our feelings and emotions as irrational and alien forces. A causal explanation of emotion would be much more comfortable. After all, if my anger is just the result of a series of complicated neurophysiological and chemical causes, I cannot be held responsible for it.

A causal explanation may uncover interesting chemical and physiological changes in the body, but it can never grasp the intentionality of emotion. In anger, your entire body-self is organized and oriented toward the object of your anger: in the example given above, your friend. You may yell at him, try to hit him, or turn red in the face suppressing your desire to hit him. Your angry psychospacial orientation toward him is obviously much different from, say, the joyful psychospacial orientation in seeing a loved one for the first time in years. Your friend is the reason for your anger, and so he is the one toward whom all your feeling is directed. But your anger is *about* what happened, while the physical pain in your foot is not about the nail itself, but is an effect caused by the nail piercing your skin.

An emotional orientation is a prereflective way of being present in the world, a way of organizing and occupying space, a way of understanding the world, and a way of achieving a purpose. If I am angry at you, or afraid of you, or saddened by you, right or wrong, I am comprehending you differently with every emotion. Rather than admit the truth of your criticism of me, I might get angry at you in the hope of making you leave me alone. Another person might try to avoid admitting a wrongdoing by crying. In each case, the emotions are ways of understanding the world and achieving a purpose. And in each case, one's whole manner of being present, of organizing space and orienting in it, is different.

In the last chapter I defined a number of emotions psychospacially. The word "emotion" is made up of "e" and "motion" and literally means "out-motion." This literal definition of emotion lends support to the view that emotions are psychospacial orientations. Similarly, the word "expression" means literally "pressing out."

When we express, or bodily “press out” our emotions, they move out and through our bodily space toward or away from some event in our world. Our bodily presence displays how we are literally moved by and moving toward some event in our world. Fear is not wanting to be present; sadness is the loss of presence; joy is the exuberance over being present; anger is the defense of some aspect of being present. As forms of intentionality, each emotion displays a different orientation to the world. Since fear does not want to be present, it is an orientation away from rather than toward the world. Sadness does not orient away from the world, but shrinks and becomes less. Anger orients defensively toward the world to prevent or lash out in revenge at a real or imagined attack. Joy is an orientation that embraces the world with overflowing abundance.

If you look at an angry person, a sad person, a fearful person, or a joyful person, you will see how each occupies, organizes, and orients his body-space differently. But if you deny your awareness of and suppress your emotional orientation, you create a way of occupying and orienting in space that displays that denial and suppression. This denial and suppression also makes it harder for you to see the same denial and suppression in others.

Marcie’s soft, collapsed body was both a denial of her fear and a defense against anxiety: her surface was soft, yet her core was tight. Willy’s psychospacial orientation had much in common with Marcie’s, but because he was unable to face a hostile, seductive, self-deceived mother, he added an orientation that twisted away from the world. Trudy defended herself against anxiety by becoming dense. Her density was also her desperate way to overcome feeling invisible and a way to block her awareness of sadness, which in turn resulted in her loss of presence. Unwanted or not, when we block anger, we block love; when we block fear, we block trust; when we block sadness, we block joy. Each of these forms of emotional intentionality is there to be seen as a conflict in the way we occupy and orient in space.

Density and rigidity are two additional forms of intentionality

that can achieve a number of different purposes. The rigid person stands military-like and hypererect. Many people misinterpret this as “beautiful posture,” but the rigid person is uptight, not upright. He can appear haughty, supercilious, contemptuous, and domineering. His rigid superciliousness is a defense against his anger and sadness over the loss of his true self. It is also a defense against depression. And under this depression will be found anxiety.

Density and rigidity both create bodies that are too hard. But, as Stanley Keleman clearly displays in his book on the anatomy of emotions, the rigid body stands hypererect while the dense person tends to collapse.¹ Unlike Marcie’s collapse, Trudy’s collapse was dense and too hard. Density, like every unhealthy spatialization of intent, is a kind of denial, control, and defense against the world. Unlike the rigid person who has more tension-energy available to serve his workaholic lifestyle, the dense person is forced to move slower and bogs down easily in work and personal relationships. The pressure from others “to get on with it,” and the pressure of the flow of time are felt as a constant threat to such a person’s densification. So, under pressure the dense person tends to get more dense and move slower. Density is also a way to control pain. When they were very young, many dense people were beaten, humiliated, and forced to endure pain without the loving comfort of their parents. Slowing down, slowing their breathing, slowing their movement, and densifying was their only way to endure pain alone.

Intentionality is, as many phenomenologists claim, an important feature of consciousness, but it is far more than that. Intentionality is both a prereflective and a reflective bodily psychospacial orientation to the world. Apart from the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger’s undeveloped references to intentionality as a form of comportment, phenomenology has not been quick to grasp the bodily nature and structure of intentionality. By saying that intentionality is a psychospacial orientation, I am saying that intentionality is a bodily phenomenon, that it is an essential structure of the body-self.

To this expanded version of the concept of intentionality I want to add another important consideration not recognized by phenomenologists. In the previous chapter, when I distinguished between the core and surface, I pointed out that the core is the place from which we orient and that the surface is the orientation toward reality. Without a place from which to orient there can be no orientation—without a launching pad there can be no launch. Whether we are talking about the intentionality of thought, the intentionality of feeling and emotion, or the intentionality of the lived-body, we must recognize that psychospatially intentionality is both an orientation and a place from which to orient. We do not first create a place from which to orient and then orient, but in the very moment we orient we also create the place from which to orient. We cannot have one without the other and neither one happens before the other. The shaping and spatialization of core and surface arise together in our every interaction.

Traditionally, consciousness has been thought to be utterly separate and distinct from the body. Yet, even on the assumption that consciousness is a non-bodily affair, it is still true that intentionality always manifests as a core and as a surface. When phenomenologists insist that consciousness is always the consciousness of something, they are speaking only of the surface, of the orientation toward the world. But, as I have pointed out, an orientation toward the world requires a place (core) from which the orientation can proceed. The core of consciousness is the ground, the source and the place from which consciousness, reflectively and prereflectively, orients toward the world. When consciousness orients reflectively, it turns that toward which it orients into an object to be considered by a subject. When consciousness orients prereflectively, it participates with that toward which it is orienting.

In reflection, if you turn your attention to your own consciousness, you turn some aspect of it into an object for consideration. When you reflectively attend to yourself, you can never grasp the whole of what you are at any level. You can only objectify aspects

of yourself. Prereflectively, you live who you are. Later, in reflection, you recognize what you have become. Reflective consciousness can objectify only various aspects of itself, of its manner and modes of orientation, but it can never grasp the whole of itself.

Consciousness as surface is always the mobilization of self toward the world. Mobilizing yourself to orient toward the world in a certain way is an act of will. But consciousness as core never mobilizes itself toward anything. The core never mobilizes itself at all, it is without will. It is the place from which all mobilization of intent and will proceed. The surface is always some kind of doing and the core is always just being; the surface is the will and the core is allowing. You can reflectively catch a glimpse of aspects of your orientations toward the world, but you can never catch a reflective glimpse of your core. The attempt to experience your core in reflection is a bit like trying to stay awake in order to watch yourself fall asleep. Allowing can never become an act of will, and it can never be grasped reflectively by an act of will. Allowing is always prior to consciousness and the place from which consciousness orients toward the world. It can never be grasped reflectively. It can only be lived.

When you rest fully in the unconflicted allowing of *this*, your core is lived in complete, empty intensity and clarity. It then becomes differentiated from the conflicts and defenses of the ego-self. The core is both the place from which you orient toward the world and a window onto the selfless, will-less presencing of *this*. Your core is the root, source, and innermost sense of your identity. It is also the spacious heart of allowing. Your core is at once both self and no-self. In the mundanity of everydayness, the core remains lost to and undifferentiated from the defended ego-self and its fixations in the human world. Whether lost or realized, however, your core is always already just this allowing openness from which you orient and create a human self and world.

Even though the root of what you are is never apart from who you are, it ultimately transcends your human self. But your consciousness, your particularized sense of selfhood, never takes place apart

from form or oriented space. Your lived-body is the form of consciousness you call your self. This structure of consciousness always takes place as intentionality. And intentionality is always a bodily, spatial orientation that manifests as both a core and a surface.

The realization that intentionality is always a bodily core/surface phenomenon helps illuminate more completely the nature of anxiety. The reason why anxiety is so devastating is that it threatens the very core of one's defended self. As long as fear, anger, and sadness are not rooted in a defense against anxiety (as they all too often are), they are not fundamental threats to our ways of being in the world. They do not threaten our ability to orient to the world and to see things as they really are. They remain, as I said, at the surface of the self. Anxiety, however, strikes at the very heart of our existence and is a fundamental disruption of our innermost sense of self.

Anxiety is deeper than any kind of simple disorientation. If I am angry or afraid, I may or may not be somewhat disoriented. But if I am anxious, I am fundamentally disoriented. Since I no longer have a clear place from which to orient, all my orientations will be disturbed: I will no longer be able to see the world as it is. The threat of non-being, the threat of not being able to be present, is such a disruption of intentionality that the very integrity of the psychospatial unity of the self is put in jeopardy. Anxiety, therefore, is not really a form of intentionality at all, but is disorientation, the threat of the dissolution of intentionality or the threat of the loss of one's space to be.

More often than not, our emotions are either a defense against anxiety, repressed, or both, so it is not surprising that many of us do not want to have anything to do with real body-feeling and energy. The underground intellectualism of the rigid narcissist, so highly prized by our culture, is a clear example of the unhealthy attempt to deny and suppress feeling, emotion, and the body. But healthy emotion and feeling is a purposive psychospatial orientation to and understanding of the world.

Using the expanded versions of the concepts of intentionality and prereflective/reflective distinction from phenomenology, we can now look more closely at the origin and development of the human self.

The Birth and Death of the Self

In a sense, we experience two births. According to Margaret Mahler in her groundbreaking work on child development, our first birth is from our mother's womb; our second birth is the birth of a separate self, at about the age of three, from the symbiotic unity created between mother and child.² The birth of this psychospacial unity emerges with the growing sense that this space I occupy, these movements I make through space, these energies, these feelings and emotions, this will, these thoughts and perceptions, this body—all of this is me. The possibility for a self arises with the first birth and is achieved when I can eventually own this space as myself, when I emerge as a freestanding psychospacial orientation.

Each and every thing *is* precisely to the extent that it is forming and being formed. Indeed, nothing can exist independent of form, and the human self is no exception. But selfhood is not a given; it is an achievement, a form of oriented spatiality we must create. The human infant comes into the world as an undifferentiated prepersonal will-less spatiality, energy, and feeling. With the help of the parents, and especially the mother, during the first years of life, the infant begins the enormous task of developing a self and understanding the world.

The word “understanding” is interesting in this context. It means, literally, “to stand under.” We sometimes say that someone is stuck in his head, or engaged in mere head-thinking. These expressions indicate that this person's reflective thought processes are not entirely grounded in reality. From a somatic point of view, we are saying that there is not the proper “standing under” his reflective conceptualizations.

To “understand” means also “to come into agreement with.” To come into agreement with a way of seeing the world, to have the proper “standing under” a concept is much more than merely learning the definitions of concepts or memorizing some theory. Fundamental understanding is a way of prereflectively comprehending some aspect of what *is* by thoroughly unifying with what is understood. It is also the prior condition of reflective understanding, of formulating concepts and theories. If the psychospacial orientation of prereflective understanding is healthy and appropriate, then reflective understanding will tend to be healthy and appropriate. It will not tend to degenerate into mere head-thinking.

Long before the child develops language or what an adult would recognize as thinking, she begins the monumental task of understanding the world. Understanding the world requires a self that can reflect on and objectify prereflective experience. Because the infant is without a self, she is by necessity dependent upon the mother’s psychospacial orientation to the world. The child must come to understand, or come into agreement with, the mother’s world. This prepersonal drive toward understanding requires the infant to bodily unify and become congruent with the mother’s body and her ways of orienting and spatializing. In this way, the mother’s ways of occupying and orienting in space, i.e. her ways of understanding the world, become the infant’s first orientations.

Before there is a self, before there is thought, before there is will, before there is emotion, there is just spaciousness. In the embrace of maternal love, mother and child merge together to form a kind of symbiotic unity, a protected, nourishing, warm space that provides a safe, secure ground and orientation from which the infant can grow, mature, and eventually separate.

Will-lessly, the infant melds with the mother’s body and spends most of the time sleeping contently within this unity. But, in time, the infant experiences the need to separate from the unified mother-world in order to begin to create, explore, and expand his own world and self. Early attempts to separate from the symbiotic unity

can be seen when the child is being held. Instead of unifying with the mother's body, the child attempts to separate by rearing up and away from his mother. Much later, separation is accomplished by standing and walking. It is very significant, as Mahler points out, that when learning how to walk, the child walks away from the mother, not toward her.³ As the child grows and matures, he separates more and more from the symbiotic unity in a series of well-defined phases until he finally creates a freestanding, mobile, independent (although hardly complete) self.

Separation encompasses many things. At one level, the act of separating from the mother-world is practice in the exercise of the will. In practicing separation, the child begins to develop from a prepersonal will-less spatiality into willful, purposeful activity. Phenomenologically, will is movement out and away from oneself toward the world. Volition is the movement from decision to action as a way of investing the self in the world. The infant does not first create a self and then act. Rather, the infant becomes and discovers self in action, in willing. Self and will arise together in prepersonal and personal decision and action. Indeed, throughout most of our lives, as we mature toward completing and fulfilling ourselves, we continually meet and discover who we are in the many ways we invest ourselves in the world.

Separation is also the precursor of reflection. It is the first step toward reflection. As the capacity for reflection grows and develops with repeated separations at higher and higher levels of complexity and understanding, the self and will grow and develop together. The self, in other words, is in the process of being born as separation becomes reflection. But the self is not simply the act of reflection; reflection and prereflection are in fact two of the fundamental forms that intentionality takes. Reflection and prereflection are two fundamental capacities or orientations of selfhood. Indeed, only after there is a self does it make sense to distinguish between the reflective and the prereflective orientations. Before the self, separation is the precursor for reflection and unification is

the precursor for prereflection. When separation becomes reflection, reflection becomes a way of understanding by separating, reflecting on and objectifying experience. When unification becomes prereflection, prereflection becomes a way of understanding by participating in what is understood.

Thus, the movement between prereflection and reflection is prefigured in the child's many attempts to separate and then reunite with the mother. Before the self has been secured, the infant is really only a prepersonal will-less possibility for achieving a self, a kind of pre-self. Before the creation of the self there can be no real sense of "this is me" or "this is mine." But as the self arises, there simultaneously arises the ability to reflect on experience and an unspoken claim that all these energies, feelings, bodily movements are, in fact, my own, that "this is me."

The creation and securing of the self, with its gut-level claim that "this is me," is also the creating and securing of the will. After many separations from the mother-world, an independent self and will come to stand, a self that in most cases has forgotten its spacious, will-less origin. The will is one of the most essential structures of the self, and both self and will are a unique human response created to deal with the demands of the human world. As an intentional structure, the self is always manifested as a certain complicated, spatial, bodily, emotional, mental, and energetic orientation toward the world.

If all goes well during the process of creating a self, and the child is one of those very rare and fortunate people to have been blessed with emotionally healthy parents, the child has a wonderful chance to mature into an emotionally healthy person. The first developmental realization is the creation of a separate self. The second developmental realization is the completion of selfhood, or the realization of the true self. And the third developmental realization is what the Buddhists call the realization of no-self or what I call the spacious body.

Since all rarely goes well, most of us struggle all our lives with

a conflicted psychospatial orientation. As a result, the goal of completing oneself, of realizing and fulfilling what one is, hardly ever gets off the ground. And without a completed, unified self, the experience of no-self is an impossible dream.

If, during the time in which the self is being formed, there are conflicts in the child's world, conflicts in its relationship with its parents, the psychospatial orientation that is finally created will be fixated in various ways. These conflicts and fixations of the self will create conflicted and fixated orientations toward the larger world which, in turn, will help create further psychospatial conflicts. All psychological, emotional problems are conflicts of space, conflicts generated in the attempt to create a self and come into congruence and agreement with the conflicted spatializations of parents and other people. Mental disease is spatial dis-ease. And child abuse, whether physical, sexual, emotional, or all of these, is always the abuse of a child's spatial orientations.

Earlier, in referring to the core/surface distinction, I pointed out that the surface is the ego-self, the will and the orientation toward the world; and that the core is the true self, allowing and the place from which we orient toward the world. Every orientation to the world simultaneously requires a place from which to orient. As the self develops, it develops as both a core and a surface, as both the true self and the ego-self. However, too many of us are so completely conflicted and deceived about ourselves that we are not able to correctly reflect on and understand our misery. Since the misery goes so deep, it is almost impossible for us to experience our true self. This difficulty was obvious, for example, in the psychospatial conflicts of Marcie and Trudy. Ultimately, without the experience of our true self, there can be no completion of self.

At one level, the core is our deepest and innermost sense of unity and identity. As such, it must participate with every personal, conflicted or unconflicted, spatial, bodily, emotional, mental, and energetic orientation. At a deeper level, the core is an allowing openness into the spacious, will-less origin of *this*. Depending,

therefore, on what level of the core you touch, you can be brought face-to-face with anxiety, the true self, or the spaciousness that sees itself as all of *this*.

However, as long as the self remains conflicted and confused, the never-ending process of birth and death, with its tremendous power to heal and rejuvenate, can never be properly experienced. Every psychological problem and emotional conflict is already a spatial problem, a conflict in occupying and orienting in space. From a conflicted psychospatial orientation, it is next to impossible to differentiate in experience the core from the surface, the true self from the ego-self. But this differentiation in experience is precisely what is required in order for one to complete and fulfill oneself. Even though the origin and innermost being of the self is will-less, even though the core is an allowing openness into the spaciousness of *this*, the psychospatial conflicts from which we all suffer stand in powerful opposition to the wisdom and freedom that comes with the realization of the true self.

Earlier I pointed out that “to understand” means both to have the proper “standing under” reflective concepts and “to come into agreement with.” Psychospatially, understanding is coming into agreement with or becoming spatially congruent with a spatialization that is not one’s own. Coming into spatial congruence with others happens all the time. When you meet someone for the first time, notice how subtly you try to understand them by becoming their space in your own body. Becoming congruent with another’s spatialization is at the heart of all relationships, from social to sexual. Unfortunately since the spatializations of our world are so conflicted, human relationships are not always a very satisfying affair.

Self-deception is rooted in conflicted human relationships that begin in our first attempts as children to understand the world of our parents. In order to develop appropriately, a child must become congruent with the spatializations of its parents. If the parents’ psychospatial orientations are conflicted, then the child is in for a difficult time. Recall how the problems of Marcie and Willy began

with mothers who treated them with anger, hostility, and contempt. How can a developing child come into agreement with a mother or father who creates that kind of space?

The child cannot want this as her experience. Unfortunately, she must come into agreement with this hostile space in order to realize that she cannot come into agreement with it. Therefore, to some extent she must block her agreement with it, her understanding of it. In order not to feel the terrible intensity of her parent's threatening orientation, she instinctively uses the boundaries of her developing body-self to defend herself against the hostility of this space at both a core and surface level.

Willy and Marcie both created a formless surface and a tight core. Along with this original defense, Willy added a twisting away. As children, Willy and Marcie had no choice but to close down on their opening into space. After all, they could not possibly exercise the option of running away from their hostile parental space. What was originally a spacious potentiality for the blossoming-forth of a new human being became instead a fundamental psychospacial dis-ease. As adults, when they let themselves have their full space and vitality, they experienced the full force of their suffering.

Limitation is, as I have already stated, the condition of form. When we live our bodies in conflict and fixation, the limitations of space, time, and form cannot provide us with the healthy conditions through which we become who we are. Instead of becoming the conditions by which we discover our spacious body, the limitations of space, time, and form create the insane illusions of metaphysical dualism: that the body is a soft machine and the prisonhouse of the soul. Translated into psychospacial terms, metaphysical dualism is the horrible but accurate symbolic expression of the confusion and conflict between core and surface, between what the dualist in his suffering mistakenly labels "mind" and "body." Because metaphysical dualism embodies in symbolic form the deepest miseries and sufferings of mankind, I think it is fair to call it the metaphysics of dis-ease.

As we shall see in the next chapter, only when prereflective experience opens into the fullness of allowing does the possibility for dissolving the self and its conflicted spatial and temporal orientations actually come into play. Unfortunately, since the psychospacial and psychotemporal conflicts of self and world are so deeply embedded, the sort of freedom that arises with the realization of the true self is rare and hardly ever sought after in our world. For many of us, the self and will, prereflective and reflective experience, are too conflicted and confused to permit us to make the kinds of distinctions in our own experience that might set us free. As a result, much of our prereflective experience is very often dominated by our willful, defended, conflicted orientations. When the conflicted self actually does dissolve into the allowing origin of the core, as it often does, for example, during intense creative activity or a fulfilling sexual experience, its significance is not often enough noticed or appreciated.

Furthermore, since anxiety is very often at the root of our first experiences of core, the threat of non-being effectively stands in the way of our realizing the full significance what is possible in prereflective experience. As a way to ward off anxiety, we create a spatialized defense at both a core and surface level and manifest a willful intentionality in all our interactions. We have already seen how anxiety was the origin of the tight cores and the various conflicted surface orientations found in the bodies of Marcie, Trudy, and Willy. At our bodily core and surface, our defenses are structured as conflicted spatializations. These muscular and neural fixations become our habitual ways of being. Because they can become all but cemented into place, they serve the purpose of freeing us from having to continuously reconstruct them when the need arises.

As Wilhelm Reich discovered, repression is anchored in the body. Because our fixations are automatic, because they occur and are anchored outside our reflective awareness of them, and because we cannot simply drop them at will, we become machine-like and maddeningly predictable in many situations. A person dominated

by these automatic, machine-like spatializations will be drawn to theories that see the body as a soft machine and toward psychological theories that deny human freedom because behavior can sometimes be conditioned.

To sum up, each person begins life in a prepersonal will-less state of undifferentiated spatiality. From the undifferentiated spatiality of the pre-self, our self is born as a complicated, psychospatial orientation. Unfortunately, for many of us our second birth can be far more traumatic than our first. Because our parents' psychospatial orientations are conflicted and confused, and because our educational, political, and religious institutions and the world in general reflect and support many of the same neurotic, rigid, life-denying, and disassociated conflicts, we are forced as infants to create our own unique psychospatial conflict.

Continuously and throughout our lives, our self arises from its will-less origin only to dissolve again into our will-less ground and then be born again. Because both prereflective and reflective experience are dominated by the willful conflicts of the self, the significance and power of this continual process of birth and death is lost to awareness. But with the proper transformational therapies, spiritual disciplines, and appropriate ways of transforming the body, this process of dying and being reborn can become clearer and clearer, until out of the ashes of human misery a new life can manifest.

As the philosophical alchemists understood well, this path is difficult and painful. Again and again you are brought face-to-face with your darkest secrets. The alchemists called confronting the dark side of the self the *nigredo*, or the "blackening." St. John of the Cross called it the "dark night of the soul" because of the pain and suffering that emerges in the attempt to know yourself as thoroughly as possible. The blackening results from the *separatio*, from the attempt to separate or differentiate your true self from your ego-self; or, what is the same thing, your core from your surface. When your core and surface are properly separated in the fires of transformation, when your conflicted psychospatial orientations

are properly transmuted, when you finally come to terms with your conflicted self, the first stage of the alchemystical marriage of heaven and earth, the *mysterium coniunctionis*, is completed.

With the realization of the true self and the death of one's major emotional conflicts, a new freedom and way of life emerges. The realization of the true self is what Gerard Dorn, alchemist and student of Paracelsus, called the *vir unus*, or the realization of the true man. The alchemists called it the philosopher's stone. Others have called it the realization of Christ-consciousness. The philosophers of India called it the realization of Atman. It is a kind of death of the conflicted self and the birth of a new self—a completed, unified sense of self that is not limited by the narrow confines and defenses of the ego-self and its emotional conflicts. Through this stage of transformation, body and self are brought to a healthier, fuller level of being. The difficulties and problems of everyday life no longer have the same impact as before. One's sense of unity and freedom go so deep that nothing can completely disturb it for long. One stands on a new, stable ground no longer buffeted about by the emotional conflicts of everyday life.

Some have described this realization of the core as "being in the world, but not of it." While this may describe the completion and unification of the self, it is not a description of the final realization of life. The realization of the true self is only a necessary stage on the way to the experience of the spacious body of no-self. Indeed, those who say, "I am in the world but not of it," are really saying that the world is still a problem to them. They are expressing the fact that there is still a subtle difficulty inherent in their relationship to the world. They are, as the Buddhists say, attached to the inside (the core as the true self).

As I have stated before, the core is fundamentally an allowing openness into the spaciousness of *this*; it is a window into eternity. The second stage of the alchemist's *mysterium coniunctionis* is the union with the *unus mundus*, or eternal ground of being, and the *corpus glorificationis*, or the resurrection of the (spacious) body. The

alchemist's notion of union with the *unus mundus* and the *corpus glorificationis* is, as far as I can determine, the same as Hakuin's "this very body is the body of the Buddha in the lotus land of purity." No longer restricted by a root sense of self, the spacious body simply sees itself as all of *this*. The spacious body is the site at which all of this sees itself as *this*.

When the self finally dies to itself so thoroughly that its major conflicts and fixations die, it dissolves into its will-less origin. This death makes it possible for a new kind of self to be reborn. This newly reborn self can still separate and split the world into subject and object. In contrast to the conflicted body-self with all its fixated psychospacial orientations, the reborn body-self is a psycho-*spacious* orientation that stands on new ground. It stands on a ground that is no ground at all, but rather a will-less, selfless, originating emptiness, an emptiness that is neither identical to nor separate from all modes of being and consciousness.

The movement between the reflective and prereflective is no longer dominated by the willful, emotional conflicts of the self. The prereflective is no longer rooted in willful, conflicted orientations to the world, but rests, instead, in an allowing openness to what is. Whether in reflection or prereflection, the self remains fluid and orients to the world appropriately. When freed of conflicts and fixations, it becomes possible to see the world as it is. This fluid, unconflicted self still creates an objective world and is still capable of splitting the world into subject and object. But the separation does not occur as a conflicted, willful spatialization that turns away from its will-less origin. In the place of a conflicted, willful will and its fixated spatiality, an allowing-will with a fluid, unfixated spacious orientation emerges. Core and surface, allowing and willing, remain in the fluid unity of no-self from which a fluid self can be created over and over again in order to live in the human world. What was once a psychospacial orientation becomes a psycho-*spacious* orientation.

The prepersonal, will-less spatiality of the infant is not the same

as no-self and the spacious body. Without the creation of a self and its ability to reflect on experience, there could be neither knowledge nor wisdom. Wisdom is simply the allowing openness that sees itself as all of this: together with and separate from *this* at the same time. Only after the creation of self is wisdom in this sense even possible.

From pre-self to self, from self to true self or completed self, from completed self to the wisdom of the spacious body of no-self—this is the rightful odyssey of human life.

Notes

1. Stanley Keleman, *Emotional Anatomy* (Berkeley, California: Center Press, 1985).
2. Margaret S. Mahler, with Fred Pine and Ann Bergman, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).
3. Mahler, *et al.*, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant*, p. 73.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Allowing-Will

A GLIMPSE INTO the heart of creation, an experience of the lotus land of purity and the body of the Buddha, an opening into the radiantly presencing spaciousness of *this*, will inevitably send you careening into the impoverished notions of body, self, and world that our culture blindly projects as truth. The examples, descriptions, and theory I am offering are meant to show that the body is not a mere thing among other things of the world and that a human being is, at a fundamental level, oriented space and time. The form of an event determines the nature of the event—not only *how* it happens but *what can* happen. Your body is the form you happen as.

In a very real way, the human world manifests the same patterns of distortion and conflict that individuals confront in their personal lives. To a great extent, individual psychospacial and psychotemporal conflicts are held in place by a prereflectively agreed-upon world. The world as most of us live it nourishes, supports, and reflects back a prereflective understanding of “the way life is.” For the most part, these prereflective fixations of congruence constitute the conventional definitions of reality. Similar to the way in which our desires, hopes, and fears mold and manipulate the ongoing events of a dream where everything is a reflection of itself, our life unfolds in the everydayness of the human world. For most of us, the world we live is the person we are.

As I pointed out in the Chapter One, philosophy is the love of spaciousness, or, what is the same thing, the spaciousness of love. The true philosopher attempts to articulate the truth of what is by finding and speaking from this nonpreferential love and spaciousness. Without the love of spaciousness, there can neither be the allowing openness to existence required by the doing of philosophy nor the transformation of the one who asks the question. Most disciplines of Western reflective thought, including academic philosophy, attempt to reflect on and objectify reality from within a conflicted and fixated psychospacial and psychotemporal orientation—almost always guaranteeing the creation of unhealthy and distorted theories of life.

The heedless acceptance of the view that the body is a soft machine is a excellent example of such a distortion. Most of modern science pursues the investigation of reality in accordance with the mechanistic Cartesian/Newtonian framework. Investigating processes of life as if they were machines, while very limited, is relatively harmless. In fact, it has produced many technological and medical advances. But when scientists move from the position of using mechanistic models to understand living systems to the unwarranted claim that the body is nothing but a soft machine, not only have they have made a logical error, they also have ceased being scientists, and become thoughtless metaphysicians of dis-ease.

The human self is not other than the body. It is neither within nor separate from and independent of the oriented space and time of the body. You do not own or have a body. The body is not an object in measurable space that you inhabit—your body is the *condition* for owning and inhabiting objects. You are your body. Unfortunately, the statement “You are your body” is far from simple. It is hardly ever grasped properly from within our world’s conflicted psychospacial and psychotemporal orientations.

In reflection, the psychospacially and psychotemporally conflicted self separates and objectifies reality in accordance with its own conflicts, which are often nourished by the conflicts of its

world. Since these conflicts penetrate to the very core of our body-selves, it is difficult to experience our bodies as anything but an alien presence, an object that somehow imprisons us and interferes with our deepest needs for freedom. Experientially, then, the view that the body is a soft machine is appealing and makes some sense to our conflicted selves.

When we suffer, if we look deeply enough, we can experience our own unique psychospacial, psychotemporal conflicts. Truly seeing into ourselves will provide the impetus for change. Without this experiential seeing into ourselves it is next to useless to study theories and books or develop new strategies for improving our lives. Most self-improvement programs merely provide you with a new set of ideas and strategies about how to willfully manipulate your life from within the confines of the conflicted self with its uncreative, machine-like response patterns.

By itself, it is useless to become analytical and reflective about ourselves. Learning to talk intelligently about our problems is not transformation. Discussing and reading books on theories of transformation is not transformation. Nor is the solution to be found in the absurd attempt to turn against the intellect. Every so-called “anti-intellectual” I have ever met was, in fact, an intellectual taking an intellectual stand against the intellect. When our body-selves stand in conflict, we are conflicted at both the reflective and prereflective levels. Transformation will not happen by adopting yet another theory, strategy, or refinement of existing skills at the level of the will. Transformation will not happen by abandoning our intellectual faculties. Transformation is a free and creative act which demands a transformation and reorientation at every level of our being, from body to intellect to spirit. The answer to life’s question is the transformation of the one who asks the question from the depths of his or her own self-confrontation.

I continue to emphasize the fundamental importance of the body to transformation because it is extremely rare to see its complete and proper understanding. Many more psychotherapists than

ever before take account of and work with the body. No matter how good and useful their work with people is, however, their theoretical statements are often very confused. I have heard people try to take account of the role of the body in transformation by saying that they are dealing with the kinesthetic body, the “dream-body,” or some other kind of body which is claimed to be the true locus of the self. But they are not, they say, dealing with the real body. By “real body,” they most often mean the body as it is objectified in reflection by science—the body as measured. But if the *real* body is the body of reflective science, the soft machine, then the dream-body or the kinesthetic body must be something subjective, and, hence, not real. Trapped within this way of thinking, it seems to follow that whatever is not objective is necessarily subjective. If the real body is the measurable body of science, then any other kind of body must be subjective, imaginary, merely mental, and not real. And if it is not real, how do you work with it in therapy?

The problem arises from accepting the body as studied by science as the real body. It is useful to ask what “real” means in this context—real as opposed to what? The body as a soft machine is a reflective abstraction, a certain way of separating from the body as experienced and objectifying it for a specific kind of study. The body as we prereflectively live it is not a thing, an object, or a bloodless abstraction: it is *who we are*. Scientism has unfortunately narrowed our concept of the objective world by reducing it to the measurable. But the body is not just a thing that takes up measurable space, even though from a very limited perspective it can be considered that. The lived-body is the space we are, the space we live; it is the lived-space from which we orient toward our world.

Prereflection is the prior condition of reflection. We reflect on what was prereflective, sometimes poorly and sometimes well. The view that the body is nothing but a soft machine is a piece of poor reflection that arises from conflict and dis-ease. Clearly then, what is not measurable and not objectifiable by science is not necessarily subjective. The lived-body, the lived-space that we are, is neither

an objective nor subjective thing. It is the prior condition of the subjective and the objective.

I began this book with some of my first experiences of transformation and the unconflicted lived-space of the body. In Chapter Two, I continued this descriptive process by highlighting various levels of transformation in some of my clients. My aim has been first to display rather than define how transformation is always a matter of the transformation of the lived-body. I have tried, especially in Chapter Three, to begin developing a language and theory that is appropriate to experience at any level of transformation.

However, I have not yet described how transformation actually takes place. How does it happen, for example, that one person emerges transformed from a personal crisis and another does not, even though both are on the same path to wholeness? How are we healed of disease? How do we become psychologically and emotionally well? How do we become enlightened? Although varying in detail and occurring at different levels in our being, the answer to all these questions is essentially the same.

Asking these questions and others like them amounts to asking about the nature and experience of creativity—one of the greatest mysteries of human life. It is as much about breaking and transforming the mechanical repetition of our own patterns of misery as it is about creating art or making new scientific breakthroughs. It concerns how the self and will are created from a spaciousness which is not will and not self, and how, once created, self and will can die again and again into the will-less origin. Creating a self is like pulling yourself up by your bootstraps when there is no one to do the pulling and nothing to pull. It is like creating *some*-thing from *no*-thing. It is like moving back and forth between the reflective and the prereflective. It cannot be defined and no matter how hard you try to analyze it reflectively, you can never fully grasp the creative leap from no-self to self and back again. Trying to calculate this leap reflectively presents the very same difficulty inherent in trying to grasp any creative leap. Where do creative ideas, works

of art, and solutions come from? But while it cannot be easily described, it can be experienced, and experienced with such depth that your whole life and bodily being are transformed in the process. Getting to the heart of this great matter requires understanding that true creativity, freedom, and transformation, while involving the self and will, never arise from them. "Understanding" in this sense means being able to prereflectively experience this matter without the interference of the conflicted body-self, being able to articulate it conceptually, and being able to manifest or live it beyond the moment.

In my first few years as a Zen student, I remember so clearly being enthralled and dumbfounded by the process of *zazen*, sitting meditation. My first teacher loved to say in fractured English, while holding his right palm above his left, that *zazen* was, "thinking not to think . . . thinking not to think. But! Thinking not to think is still thinking." Then he would abruptly reverse his hands so that the left was above the right as he spat out the words, "And then, suddenly! Not thinking." He often ended his demonstration with the words, "Zen is not thinking and not *not*-thinking."

If you have ever done any serious meditation, you know his illustration and statements are accurate. Meditation will not result from an act of will; and yet, if you do not use your will to engage in meditation, you will not find the experience of meditation. Doing *zazen* is a bit like putting your whole life on the stove, turning up the fire and watching the dross you had unconsciously presumed to be yourself bubble away in the misery of self-confrontation. In the beginning years of *zazen*, you are many times brought face-to-face with dimensions of your personality that you did not know were there and did not want to know were there. Often you experience emotional and physical pain that represents in an unmistakably primal way your own resistance to transformation. And then, without warning, all the misery simply ceases and you find yourself in a completely open space of no-conflict. Previously troublesome thoughts come and go like wispy clouds in a limitless sky—no pain,

no conflict, no self. Now there is just this space of no conflict. Everything is without effort and without will. How did it happen?

I remember asking my second teacher to explain this process. I said, "I can understand how, if I want to move a tea cup from one place to another, I simply reach out and move it. But what I can't understand is how I go from a state of conflict to no-conflict in my meditation. What is the process by which this happens, how is it done?" To this day, I do not know if he was genuinely puzzled by my question or simply wanted to throw me back onto myself. He looked at me with great kindness and cocked his head slightly to the right with a kind of puzzled attentiveness. I waited for my answer and he said, "More zazen!"

Somewhat disappointed I thought, "Well, after all, what did you expect? This is Zen practice, not an academic seminar in philosophy." Without fully realizing it, I found myself once more entangled in a philosophical question that would take many years to unravel.

As I descended into this process, I noticed that many experiences, while not as deep or clear, shared a kind of structural similarity to this experience of zazen. The experience of running down a mountain described at the beginning of this book is just one such experience. In these kinds of experiences, you find yourself confronted at first with some great difficulty that taxes your resources to the limit. But if you stick with it, at some point in time you will probably experience the joyful exhilaration of accomplishing your goal effortlessly.

I read everything I could about this elusive experience. I read theories of creativity, firsthand accounts of the experience of creativity, theories of the unconscious, and all the mystical writings I could find. Here and there I found insight. I continued my search and after I had come to some experiential clarity and philosophical understanding of the process, I met my third teacher. One of the first things I remember him saying was, "If you study Zen long enough, you must become fascinated with how the human self and

will can arise from something selfless and will-less." Since neither of my previous Zen teachers were able to bring philosophical clarity to this process, I was excited over at last having found a philosophical Zen teacher.

Creative Performance

The examples abound and almost everyone has had some experience of the doing-of-not-doing, or *wu wei*, as the Taoists called it. Was there ever a time in your life when you learned to play a musical instrument and stayed with it long enough to become accomplished? Perhaps you remember the kinds of difficulties you encountered at first. In playing the guitar, for example, every note or new chord you learn seems to end up a buzzing and muffled cacophony produced by aching fingertips. Over time, however, your technique gets better and clearer until you attain a certain habitualization of technique that frees you from having to stop and think about what you are doing. Nevertheless, during this phase of learning you are in a sense still alienated from your instrument and your body. The guitar and your hands are experienced as something separate by means of which you are trying to realize your intentions. At this stage in your learning, the music you produce and your experience of yourself appears mechanical, studied, and completely lacking in spontaneity. In time, however, you may notice moments or long periods of time in which the music seems to flow effortlessly through you. Guitar, body, and self are completely unified in a space of no-thinking from which music pours forth. Inspiration, expression, and the work of art are not experienced as three separate events, but are realized as one spontaneous, spacious action. In a freedom that knows no hindrance, it is as if the music is being played through you. Paradoxically, it could not happen without you, and yet there is no "you" playing. In my academic writings I called this experience of inspired activity "creative performance."¹

Obviously, creative performance happens in a heightened and extraordinary space of prereflection. Too much reflection would certainly be the death of this experience. Unlike many of our everyday experiences of prereflection, creative performance happens within a relatively unconflicted, unfixated space. In some inexplicable way, you break free of the limitations of conflicted lived-space during creative performance. But the question remains: “How does this happen?” More precisely stated, the question is: “What is the way or the process by which this leap from a conflicted orientation to the unconflicted, unobstructed prereflection of creative performance is accomplished?”

Let’s look at this experience more closely. Consider any new project, challenge, or activity you might take up. If it is truly a new project for you, you will be presented with problems and obstacles with which you will likely have difficulty dealing. In the sense in which I am using the term, an “obstacle” is anything you cannot handle with your established methods, theories, or habits. An obstacle, therefore, is anything that demands some kind of creative response. To you and me, an ordinary door is not an obstacle in this sense. But to a two-year-old whose parents are out of sight on the other side, the same door can loom as an immense, frustrating, and threatening barrier.

Great or small, an obstacle always places us in a crisis situation. The word “crisis” means literally “a turning point.” If we know how to deal with this situation as we have dealt with similar past situations, then we are not at a turning point. Nothing new is required of us. But a true crisis stops us dead in our tracks. Can you remember being bewildered and miserable in a crisis situation and asking yourself, “How am I supposed to deal with this?”

Maybe your lover died or left you for someone else. Maybe a trusted friend has betrayed your trust in some way. Maybe all of what used to give you pleasure and provide meaning in your life has become dull and empty. Maybe you are experiencing writer’s block. Maybe you ache all over because you just finished exercising for the

first time in ten years. Or maybe you are doing zazen and your body is on fire with the pain of self-confrontation. Whatever the depth of the crisis, confronting an obstacle always brings some kind of displeasure. This displeasure can be mild or agonizing, it can include depression and anxiety, and it can be experienced at any or all levels of our being—physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

Look more deeply and you will discover that each displeasure brings with it a kind of tension that initially has no specific bodily location. If you do not try to flee or manipulate yourself by means of your habitual patterns of avoidance, you will realize that this tension is the beginning of your own mobilization of power for overcoming the obstacle. This tension is actually a kind of energy that you instinctively summon forth when confronting an obstacle. More fundamentally, it is actually a form of intentionality, an excitement over the imbalance of your present situation.

Our world, unfortunately, is in great confusion about the nature of this displeasure-tension-energy. A major life-crisis involves the self with such depth and completeness that the appropriate response can only be one that not only changes the situation, but transforms the one who suffers. Anything short of this radical transformation is simply willful self-deception. A major crisis is not properly experienced if you see it as a mere random accident coming at you from the outside to block your way. A crisis is precisely this painful situation because you are the one embedded in it, and you are in this situation in the way you are because this situation is this way and no other.

Because we suffer and because our culture supports the idea that all suffering is bad, we usually cannot stay with our misery long enough to embrace and understand it. Usually we try to rationalize, deny it, or manipulate our feelings about it: "This isn't fair; I did nothing to deserve this," or "It's nothing, *I* can handle it by myself." Perhaps rather than reflecting on how our life and choices brought us to this crisis, we set about blaming others. More than

likely we retreat over and over into our favorite addictions, the kinds of things we all do in the face of difficulties that demand self-confrontation and transformation: we go looking for friends who will listen and agree to our every attempt at self-justification; we seek out entertainment, sex, drugs, and alcohol, or false therapy; we embrace a pseudoreligious lifestyle and pray to God to take our suffering away; and so on.

As we willfully attempt to ignore, dominate, or manipulate ourselves and our situation, the tension-energy becomes localized perhaps as a tension headache, backache, or upset stomach. It localizes wherever we have learned how to hold back our own excitement or defend ourselves against ourselves and the world. In other words, we deal with this present conflict according to our already established patterns of denial and avoidance. Unfortunately, more often than not, these harmful patterns are the ones that our world seems to support. Obviously a crisis is not overcome through willful manipulation, which attempts to bury the crisis in our already existing patterns of self-conflict, thereby creating more conflict in an already conflicted psychospacial, psychotemporal orientation.

If you do not try to willfully manipulate your situation, an entirely different sort of experience unfolds. Consider again the example of learning to play the guitar. As you learn not to interfere with your playing, as you cease trying to force the music, you begin to find more and more the space of creative performance. In place of willful effort is effortlessness. The sense of separateness between self, body, instrument, and music dissolves into a soft, spacious, joyful unity of intention and action where the music flows without self or hindrance. The tension of displeasure that had been so much a part of your previous experiences of performing has been almost magically transformed and transfigured into a relaxed but powerful energy that enlivens and flows throughout your body.

Allowing

What is fascinating about the leap into creative performance is that it occurs without the will. In fact, trying to will this experience is the best guarantee that it will not happen. Yet without the will, without effort, you would never be able to sustain the discipline of learning to play a musical instrument, or to do anything for that matter. And without the will you would never be able to express or execute your inspiration. But the actual movement into the pre-reflective space of no-conflict is not an act of will at all. It is an act of *allowing*.

Freedom or creative performance cannot happen without the will, but it does not arise from the will. This point is important to underscore. For over 2,000 years, Western thought has assumed that true freedom is a matter of being able to make decisions and choices by means of the will. In fact, most philosophical investigations into human freedom are referred to as “the problem of free will.” Even the existentialists and the existential phenomenologists, with the exception of the later work of Heidegger, still view consciousness and freedom as ultimately grounded in the will. Because freedom cannot arise from the will alone, these assumptions simply occlude the nature of freedom. Freedom is more than merely the ability to choose one course of action over another.

Freedom arises in *allowing*, in an unconflicted prereflective participatory understanding of the nature of your situation. Because it is prereflective and because it is a form of understanding, allowing is not some sort of passivity or resignation to an impossible situation. In allowing, you neither deny nor separate yourself from yourself and your situatedness. Rather, you sustain your connection to your situation, you understand and accept your part in what has happened, and the tension of displeasure is transformed into the energy of empowerment.

To be empowered means you have the power to transform yourself and your situation. It means you have the power and right to

act and that your action will be appropriate to your situation. Empowerment is also, therefore, responsibility. As Fritz Perls pointed out, “responsibility” literally means “the ability to respond.” And I would add to Perls’ observation that responsibility is the power to respond to your situation in a fitting way. Responsibility is not merely “doing your duty” according to some external code of ethics or obligations. Any willful attempt to manipulate your situation or conform to external authority always lacks integration, empowerment, authentic response, and, hence, freedom. From within a conflicted and untransformed orientation we all too often willfully make our choices and decisions. But unless our choices and actions proceed from allowing, we are not yet free in the fullest sense.

Whether you are dealing with a major crisis in your life, practicing Zen meditation, or learning to play a new and difficult piece of music, the movement from displeasure and tension to the joyful abandonment of creative performance begins in the moment of allowing. If you wish to experience the allowing of inspiration and meditation, you cannot strategize your way to this elusive experience. You cannot try not to try, you cannot will not to will, you cannot think not to think. Creative performance will simply not happen if you try to will your way to it. The will is necessary for disciplining yourself and for staying with the sometimes agonizing tension and suffering of a major crisis. But in the end, when the tension reaches its peak, you must surrender body-self and will in the act of allowing in order for creative performance to occur. Anything short of true allowing is simply a retreat from transformation. Only when our actions arise from the spaciousness of allowing do they become appropriate and free in the fullest sense.

The Unwilling-Will

Since Western thought is so thoroughly committed to understanding consciousness and freedom as essentially grounded in the will, we too easily confuse allowing with passivity and giving up.

Allowing is, in fact, just the opposite of giving up. Allowing is a matter of surrendering a conflicted, nonparticipatory self into the prereflective allowing spaciousness of no-self, which is the ultimate groundless-ground and condition of reflection and the subjective and objective world.

Surrender is by no means submission or resignation. Rather, allowing, or surrender, is a participatory acceptance and understanding of the whole of our situation: that it happened just this way and no other, and that we played an important part in the manifestation of this crisis. In resignation we cover up how our conflicted self brought us to a crisis. Instead of embracing the totality of what has happened, we consider ourselves an innocent bystander or victim. We stand outside our crisis and objectify it as a problem thrust accidentally or unfairly upon us. When every attempt to willfully change the problem as we misrepresent it to ourselves fails, we throw up our hands in angry confusion and resign ourselves to an impossible situation. In resignation, we would rather withdraw into willful passivity and, in extreme cases, densify our body-self, than transform the one who suffers.

An adult who continuously collapses into density and withdraws into willful passivity was probably forced into this pattern of defense as a child. It may have been the best psychospacial orientation available to the child. But the resigned adult unfortunately remains stuck in an angry, confused bog of density and willful passivity. Instead of being transformed into the energy of empowered action, the tension of displeasure is pushed down into the density and collapse of the body.

Although resignation is a form of willful passivity, not all willful passivity is resignation. Generally, willful passivity is a holding-back on action in the place of trying to resolve whatever difficulty has emerged. It is a defensive attempt to willfully withdraw, ignore, or deny a situation. It can also be a way of trying to wait out a crisis in the hopes that it will eventually go away. Clearly, willful passivity is not the willing openness to transformation found in allowing.

The other side of willful passivity is willful activity. Unlike the person who willfully withdraws from a crisis, another person might willfully or even violently propel himself into dominating and manipulating himself and others. If willful activity is his preferred pattern of avoidance, often such a person's body will be rigid, military-erect, and uptight. He and his narcissistically-oriented peers will see themselves as aggressive, success-oriented, high-energy people who are able to "get the job done." But the trained eye sees rigidity and denial of his true self by means of a fantasized ideal self, suppressed anxiety, anger, and the inability to love. Because the energy of empowerment has been blocked and too tightly contained by rigidity, such people are often uptight, tension-ridden workaholics.

There is yet another form of passivity which is not entirely willful in character that might be confused with allowing. It could be called the passivity of letting go of will and form. Marcie most clearly represented this psychospacial orientation. As I pointed out, her fear, her not wanting to be present, was a collapse into a soft form that willed formlessness. You do not have to be a fear-anxiety type like Marcie to understand this form of passivity. Most of us have experienced daydreaming, wanting to go to sleep, or perhaps even fainting when confronted with an obstacle we are unwilling to face. Obviously, going to sleep is not an act of will—trying to will sleep is the surest method I know for producing insomnia. Fainting, daydreaming, and going to sleep are all ways of not willing. But while they are not acts of will, neither are they transforming acts of allowing. Each of these acts of not willing are designed to both lose and break the movement and arousal of the tension-energy of displeasure. Choosing formlessness is an attempt to dissipate rather than contain the tension-energy. Unfortunately, this maneuver unwittingly prevents the transformation of tension-energy into the energy of empowerment.

There is a certain willfulness about a person who constantly avoids difficulties by sleeping or daydreaming, but the passivity

involved at the moments of going to sleep or daydreaming is not itself an act of will. Nor is this passivity a form of allowing. Allowing is an unconflicted letting-be, an openness to what is, an intense but relaxed wakefulness, an integrated participatory understanding of and remaining with our situation. It is a willingness for transformation. These considerations imply that allowing is fulfilled and completed only in empowered, responsible willing and action. Clearly, the passivity of sleeping, daydreaming, or fainting when confronted with an obstacle is a collapse in the face of transformation. It is a retreat or swoon into letting go, not the letting-be of allowing which is the condition of true freedom and creative performance.

Perhaps the most common way to misunderstand the leap into creative performance is to try to frame the process in terms of the traditional categories of activity and passivity. By assuming at the outset that all human action and freedom are grounded in the will and that action is to be understood according to the active/passive distinction, it seems to follow that allowing must be a form of passivity. As we have just seen, however, passivity and activity are both forms of willing. Clearly, the passive/active distinction is utterly inappropriate for understanding the nature of allowing.

When we orient toward our world in conflict and fixation, our passive or active orientations are often rooted in an ersatz maneuver of what I shall call the *unwilling-will*. Willful activity, willful passivity, and the passivity of letting go are all forms of the unwilling-will. The unwilling-will is essentially not yet a free will because it is not grounded in allowing and because it is unwilling to be transformed. The unwilling-will is a self-deceived act of will; it is a recoil from the demand for self-transformation, a demand that the world with all its obstacles constantly makes of us.

As we have already seen, self and will arise together as a unique psychospacial orientation. In most cases, the body-self is fixated and imprisoned in a conflicted and complicated pattern of lived-space. Because of our conflicted psychospacial orientations most

of us meet, live, and make demands of our world by means of our unwilling-wills. Without a number of profound experiences of allowing in which our body-self and its conflicts are surrendered and dissolved in a spaciousness greater than itself, these fixations and their attendant addictions and patterns of avoidance remain cemented in place.

Because the spatializations of the unwilling-will structure the very core of the defended body-self, prereflection for most of us is also dominated by these conflicts. To take an extreme example, the automatic reactions of a paranoid person often occur prereflectively. Although prereflection is often dominated by the conflicts of the unwilling-will, it need not be. It could be rooted in the freedom of allowing. The difference between the prereflection of allowing and the prereflection of the unwilling-will is the difference between true freedom and dis-ease.

There are many levels of allowing. At the deepest level, allowing is not a form of consciousness. It is the unobstructed, radiantly presencing spaciousness which both knows itself as all of *this* and can separate from *this* to create a human self and will without losing itself. At another level, allowing can be the experience of the unified, completed, true self. This experience was manifested in Elaine's discovery of her core. Allowing is at the heart of any truly creative endeavor, from creating a work of art to handling a major life-crisis. What has come to be called "peak experience" and "peak performance" are often shallow but important manifestations of allowing in everyday activities. Fundamentally, allowing is a surrendering of the body-self and its conflicts into a spaciousness greater than itself from which empowered willing and action can manifest. Whatever the activity—zazen, playing the guitar, running a race, overcoming a crisis—allowing is the way by which we move from a conflicted, unfree orientation into the freedom of creative performance.

Unfortunately, the nature and importance of allowing is hardly ever noticed or understood in our world. For the most part, the

conflicted spatializations of the unwilling will dominate the human world at every level from our institutions to personal relationships. Apart from disease and poverty, nowhere is the suffering of our time more obvious than in the sphere of relationships, especially between men and women. There is no better place to look for the freedom of allowing than in the midst of our everyday conflicts.

Touching and Being Touched

Instead of completely embracing the limitations of life, we usually recoil from them. But think about what happens if you truly and unselfconsciously embrace another person. When you reach out to embrace another, whether it is your friend, your child, or your lover, you are reaching out to touch that person. Touching is an act of will, a movement out and away from yourself designed to accomplish a certain end.

But notice if the person being embraced is not at first simply reaching out to touch back, but is instead letting herself be embraced or be touched. Being touched is not an act of will; it is an act of allowing. By allowing herself to be embraced by you, she accepts and opens her body-space for your touch. Notice, however, if she is afraid, embarrassed, generally uptight, or simply does not trust you, she will not truly allow herself to be touched. Even though you may get into some kind of physical contact with her body (she may be unwilling to just push you away,) she will not allow your touch. Things contact other things—just because your body is in contact with hers is no guarantee that she is being touched. But human beings can also touch. Allowing is neither an active nor passive act of will. That she can refuse to be touched shows that allowing is an action we can freely choose, an action that is not an act of will.

Allowing or being touched is a choice, but not an act of will. If she allows herself to be touched, then at that very moment she is also touching you. In allowing yourself to be touched by her, you

open your body-space to her and you are both touching and being touched by one another. In your embrace, touching and being touched, willing and allowing, arise together in the prereflective reciprocity of selfless bodily openness for each other.

If, however, when you reach out to embrace her, you attempt to manipulate her to your own ends, you are not truly touching her. Manipulation interferes with her being. If you interfere with her in this way, you cannot let her be. If you cannot allow her being, you cannot allow her touch. If you cannot allow her being and her touch, you cannot truly touch her. You can only contact her manipulatively and your embrace is false. Your false attempt to touch her is essentially an unfree act of your unwilling will which interferes with her freedom to be. But in a true embrace, the reciprocity of willing and allowing, touching and being touched, mutually implicate each other in the spaciousness of true human relationship. A true embrace provides a powerful example of how to live in the human world.

The Creative Appropriation of Limitation

The literal meaning of the word “existence” is suggestive: “standing forth.” Whatever exists stands forth. Whatever stands forth, exists as a form. What exists and stands forth as a form has boundaries. The boundaries of a form constitute, in part, its limits. Take away the boundaries or limits of a form, and it ceases to be. Prior to but not separate from the unlimited varieties of subjective and objective forms, prior to but not separate to the whole play of existence and nonexistence, is the groundless-ground of the totality of what *is*: radiantly presencing spaciousness. Spaciousness is never separate from the forms of the world. It is neither identical to nor other than the world of form.

A human being emerges as a peculiar form among all other forms. Our standing forth is also a standing up. In standing up and walking away from its parent, a young child discovers, explores,

and exercises body-self and will in powerful and exuberant new ways. In the excitement of this newly born self-mastery and will, the child creates, in response to her world, conflicted and unconflicted patterns and forms of being that can last a lifetime. The mastery of standing and walking is a significant event that usually signals the birth of a freestanding, separate, but incomplete individual body-self and will. Years later, after the conflicted orientations have become fixed in unfulfilling patterns of living, the adult yearns for release from his tension, aches and pains, and emotional misery.

But there is no release at the level of will and ego-self. There is no technology of transformation; in fact the notion of a transformational technique is an oxymoron. Like the popular joke that "Army intelligence" is an oxymoron, it is self-contradictory and self-defeating. You can will yourself to run, but you cannot will yourself to experience "runner's high." You can will yourself to paint a painting or play a piece of music, but you cannot will yourself to be inspired. You cannot will creativity and transformation. There are ways to change your context in order to encourage creativity, but there are no techniques or step-by-step recipes for creativity. You cannot will allowing; you must simply allow. If you do allow, then there is no "you" to do it. From the spaciousness of allowing, you can then act and will appropriately.

If you realize allowing in the midst of a profound crisis or after years of Zen meditation, in time, more and more of your everyday life will be spent in creative performance, in the *allowing-will*. If there are only a few moments of allowing in our lives, we will live more and more in the unfreedom and dis-ease of the unwilling-will. Instead of experiencing the boundaries of our body-selves as the place at which we begin being, we will experience the boundaries of our body-selves as the place at which we stop being. Plato's and Descartes' experience of the body will become ours.

As I have already pointed out, whatever exists is bounded and limited; limitation is the condition of existence and form. To be a

human being is, at one level, to be limited. To live in the human world and the world of form is to live in the midst of limitation. When we are comfortable, we normally take no notice of limitation. But when the obstacles and crises of life appear, we fall into our misery and remain transfixed in limitation. Often we willfully seek out the latest techniques or strategies that promise a quick fix.

The appearance of an obstacle or crisis in our life is a particular manifestation of limitation. In the form of a true obstacle, limitation confronts us with the demand for transformation, a demand which may be great or small depending on the depth of the crisis. But great or small, the demand and its attendant displeasure and tension remain in effect. If we flee from limitation, we act unfreely, we act according to the dictates of the conflicted, unwilling-will. From conflict we produce more conflict. The tension, untransformed, remains buried in conflict, producing the bodily, emotional, and mental misery so apparent everywhere in our world. Seeking relief, we retreat into our favorite addictions as a way of numbing our tension and dis-ease. Such a maneuver is ultimately ineffective, and each new obstacle that arises throws us back into another series of self-defeating distractions.

To be a human body-self living in the human world and yet somehow free of limitation is an impossible dream. Limitation limits our life only when we recoil from transformation. The unwilling-will recoils from transformation through willful activity, willful passivity, or swooning into formlessness. Ultimately, limitation cannot be manipulated or escaped. But it can be embraced with a surrender so complete that you are simultaneously embraced and transformed. By allowing what is to be, you choose to understand your situation and not to interfere with the process of creative transformation.

Allowing is the way by which we dissolve our conflicted psychospacial, psychotemporal orientations. It is the way to begin distinguishing core from surface, true self from ego self. In allowing, your core is surrendered free of the conflicts of the human self. If

allowing opens deeply enough, it can fall into the unified true self or ultimately into the spaciousness of no-self. The Zen tradition describes the depths of allowing in the expression “Body and mind drop away.” This expression gives testimony to the experience of prereflectively and spaciously aligning and coming to presence as *this*, unencumbered by the conflicts and fixations of our untransformed body-self. But at whatever depth allowing happens, no attempt is made to discharge, deny, or contain the tension of displeasure inappropriately. Rather, allowing transforms the tension into an ecstatic, integrated, and empowered energy that enlivens the whole body and infuses every gesture. This newly available energy is invested responsibly and creatively by the will in whatever activity is deemed appropriate.

With the death of the conflicted body-self and its patterns of strain and tension, limitation is simultaneously transformed into possibility. If we deal with an obstacle by means of the unwilling-will, whether we are aware of it or not, limitation will limit us as our conflicted orientations set us up to create more conflicted solutions to our problems. When you embrace limitation completely through allowing, you take the most important first step toward creative transformation. Limitations that were once limiting begin to suggest new ways of living as new possibilities arise. We begin to understand that our life is always lived suspended between limitation and possibility.

In my academic writings I defined freedom as the creative appropriation of limitation. As we have seen, to be is to be limited. But no one's life is completely limited. Limitation by limiting makes possibility possible. Possibilities abound if we exercise our freedom appropriately. If our actions are grounded in allowing, we remain attentive to the limitations that always inform our situatedness and act appropriately and freely. As long as we are alive we are always suspended between possibility and limitation. There is no such thing as impossible limitation. And contrary to the deluded fantasies often found in conflicted New Age thinking, there is no such

thing as unlimited possibility. No matter what our delusions and fantasies, we cannot do or have whatever we want. Our life is always limited to some extent.

True freedom arises, then, as the allowing-will. The allowing-will is the integrated grounding of the will in allowing. The allowing-will comes to presence in human life as the creative appropriation of limitation. "Appropriation" in this case means that your actions are appropriate to your situation. It also means that you own and allow your situation, and the transformation it demands, as your own. When you allow the limitations that inform your situation in this way, limitation provides for the actualization of possibility.

Think of what is involved in the creation of a great work of art, for example. The master of an art form surrenders herself to hardship and discipline in order to creatively perform her work. This surrender requires above all an acceptance of her own limitations, the limitations of her chosen medium and the importance of tradition. However, if she conforms blindly and completely to the standards of her tradition and models all her work on already established ways of working, she will abandon her creative freedom. On the other hand, if she completely rejects all tradition and discipline, she also will abandon her freedom in the aesthetics of escapism. Aesthetic form is like every other kind of form. It can exist only to the extent that it is limited. Art cannot happen by blindly adhering to tradition and its limitations, nor can it happen by completely rejecting them. The great artist creates from the allowing-will. She creates from a sense of what is still possible or no longer possible within her tradition, coupled with a recognition of her present limitations. She creates suspended between limitation and possibility. In art as in life, unlimited possibility and impossible limitation do not occur.

Imagine an artist at work. Suppose he finds his work going badly. Perhaps he has reached a creative impasse because the emerging work of art asks to be completed in ways that are foreign to his present methods, skills, habits of work, or even theories about the

nature of art. Perhaps, due to the suffocating pressures of imagined failure, he attempts to force his work to completion by making it conform to his present preconceptions and habits. The finished work of art becomes, then, a product of the artist's unwilling-will. The work may be flawlessly executed, but it will lack inspiration, depth, and feeling. Or, perhaps in anger, he decides to abandon his work prematurely. In either case, by willfully imposing inappropriate demands on the emerging work of art, the artist has not allowed the work to touch or speak to him. But if he were to wait in the silent openness of allowing, putting aside his suffocating frustrations and the relentless cacophony of internal voices tempting him to force the work according to his established patterns, he might very well uncover the path to an inspired work of art. In this and similar kinds of situations, only when we have reached the apparent end of our resources and let things be in allowing do we discover freedom, the power to creatively appropriate limitation.

Aesthetic form, like every other form, can exist only because it is limited. At one level of analysis, inspiration or allowing is the power to let what is happening show itself as it is. Inspiration does not willfully and inappropriately impose preconceived ideas and preexisting patterns of working on the emerging work of art. In the allowing of artistic creativity, limitation provides the structure through which freedom can be realized. Limitation is appropriated and the limits of aesthetic form become the space of possibility in which art and freedom happen. Limitation and aesthetic form are neither manipulated to produce preconceived results nor are they rejected in the aesthetics of escapism. Limitation and form are creatively appropriated through the allowing-will and the possibility of human freedom is realized in an artistic medium.

The experience of creativity, in any endeavor, is what I have called creative performance. Creative performance is not limited to the arts. It can occur in any activity from washing the dishes to dealing with a major life-crisis. But art is the only human endeavor that has as its primary goal the creation of a form whose essential

purpose is to display the realization of freedom. The work of art is the manifestation of the freedom of the allowing-will in aesthetic form. The work of art is not a mere thing among the other things of the world; it is a *work*, a performance which displays through the limitations of form the experience of true freedom. Great art displays what all art aspires to: the realization and manifestation of human freedom.

Artistic intentionality is not the only example of the creative appropriation of limitation. Nietzsche, a philosopher whose life and body were far more limited than most, clearly experienced the creative appropriation of limitation. He said that what did not kill him made him stronger, that freedom was measured by what it cost one to stay aloft, and that through his sickness he attained health. He also said that the path to heaven was through the voluptuousness of one's own hell. In his own characteristic way, Nietzsche is saying that the limitations, displeasure, and suffering encountered in any crisis or creative endeavor are necessary ingredients of any transformation.

Unfortunately, Nietzsche never quite stated the relation between suffering and transformation properly. He tended to think that pain must always be involved in all transformation and any truly creative endeavor. The relation between suffering and creative freedom is not as simple as he makes it seem, however. Not all creativity and transformation must be accompanied by suffering. The relationship can be grasped more appropriately with the following aphorism: you must first experience the suffering of transformation in order to transform without suffering.

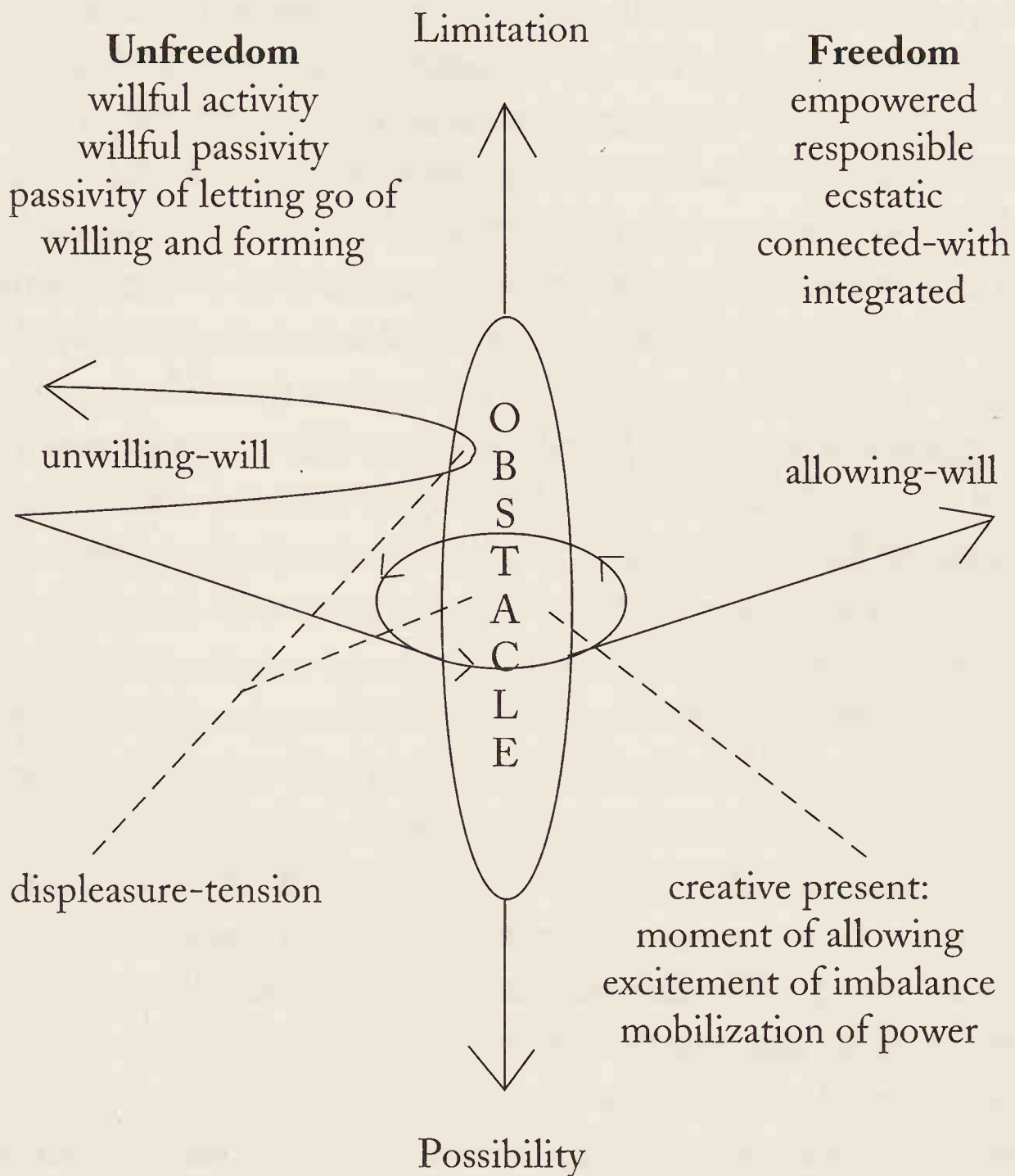
When we live from within the confines of the unwilling-will, we suffer. The unwilling-will is in conflict and fixation. As such, it can only deal with its conflicts by producing more conflict. If we continually live from within the confines of our unwilling-will, we will pattern our lives and bodies around denial and avoidance. As a result, someday we may find ourselves catapulted into a major life-crisis. At such turning points, we find ourselves transfixed by

and suffering in the limitations of our situation, not knowing where to turn or what to do next. Often in these moments our suffering intensifies. The only sane and creative way out of the misery of our situation is to go further into it: to embrace it, to allow it, to understand the depth of who and what we are, and how, through our own ignorance, we brought ourselves to this impasse. Allowing what is to be, at this point, demands an honest and penetrating attempt at self-understanding. Self-understanding necessarily brings with it more suffering. Eventually we come to see that all our favorite strategies for producing change and meaning in our lives are nothing but ways of avoiding the truth of our situation. We come to see these strategies of the unwilling-will for what they are: dead-ends that represent our recoil from life and its ceaseless demand for transformation. If we learn the lesson of allowing thoroughly enough, we learn how to let creativity and transformation unfold in us without interfering with it. As a result, we eventually come to a point where transformation is not always preceded by suffering, as Nietzsche mistakenly believed.

Regardless of how Nietzsche understood the role of suffering in transformation, however, he did not permit himself to be unduly limited by limitation and he did not fantasize about possibilities he could never attain given his unique limits. Other examples of the creative appropriation are easy to find. Bruce Lee is reported to have had a short leg. Instead of assuming he could never master *kung fu*, he creatively appropriated the limits imposed by his short leg by learning to kick in new and devastating ways, ways that were difficult to defend against. Toward the end of his life, Matisse was unable to paint. In response to his limitations, he changed mediums. From his sickbed, he cut and pasted colored papers together and produced some of his most creative and beautiful works.

The diagram on the next page displays the paths of freedom and unfreedom.

The Allowing-Will



The arrow that veers off to the left represents the unwilling-will's recoil from transformation. The path of the allowing-will moves from the left side to the right side of the obstacle, and then circles back around to the left again before it moves to the right. As we shall see, this circling-around is meant to display a rather consistent pattern to all transformation.

There are actually a number of phases to appropriately dealing with a crisis. At first, allowing manifests as acceptance. Eventually, acceptance turns into insight. You begin to understand and feel at many levels what has happened, and sometimes you under-

stand why. With insight and wisdom comes the knowledge of how to deal appropriately with your situation. The tension of displeasure is transformed into ecstatic energy, and finally you act appropriately, in an empowered, integrated, and responsible way. However, in the middle of this whole process, before you actually take empowered action, you very often find yourself in a phase that feels like a regression into old patterns more characteristic of the unwilling-will. If you have taken the process of allowing deeply enough and if you have done it many times, you realize that what appears to be a regression is really a fundamental readjusting and restructuring of your body-self in accordance with the new demands about to be made by your transformed life. In the diagram, this apparent regression is what the circling back into the left side of the obstacle represents.

You find this apparent regression at work at many levels in many different kinds of activities. Yoga is a good example. You work hard for a while trying to achieve an *asana*, or pose. When you finally realize the *asana*, your struggle is transformed into the relaxed but vital and sometimes ecstatic energy of selfless yoga. The next day, however, you quickly discover you are unable to fall easily into the open and vital space of this same *asana*; it feels as if you have regressed. But after a week or so you find it again and this time it is yours. You will not lose it again. Your body simply had to go through a period of relinquishing old patterns to this new openness. Many athletes and creative artists also experience this same sense of regression before completely integrating a new level of performance.

After my sojourn in the lotus land of purity, I experienced a series of apparent regressions that lasted two miserable years. At the time, I did not realize what was happening. Today, having been through the purifying fires of allowing many times, I now know that some of the major conflicts of my body-self were being painfully resolved. After a lot of intense struggle, allowing brought me to the lotus land of purity. But in order for the wisdom of this opening to become integrated into my life, to become more than an

intense but fleeting experience of bliss, many aspects of my conflicted body-self had to be blown out of the way.

More often than not, especially in the early experiences of transformation, allowing takes you first into a purging of your conflicted psychospacial, psychotemporal orientations and then into an ecstatic, blissful spaciousness. Next you seem to regress as allowing creates a deeper, more extensive purging and dissolving of your conflicts. Finally, the wisdom of allowing begins to come to fruition in appropriate living and action. It becomes more and more integrated into your life and you begin living more and more from the allowing-will.

The phases of transformation are acceptance, purging, wisdom, knowledge, the transformation of tension into energy, the deeper purging of apparent regression, and the integrated, appropriate action of the allowing-will. In experience, these phases often blend into each other and take a different order. If the transformation is very deep, it usually takes years to complete and you will go around and around the circle many times, cycling back through different levels of the various phases before you come out on the other side.

There are techniques and methods for willing, but there are none for the creativity of allowing. Allowing is the only way transformation happens. It is truly the method that is no-method. Without allowing, the impetus toward transformation degenerates into just another recoil of the unwilling-will. When we live and make choices by means of our unwilling-will, we would much rather sign up for another weekend workshop of transformational technologies than suffer the release of our layers of misery and denial in the purging fires of allowing.

Desire

Essentially, allowing is the only way to break up conflicted intentionality. It is the only way to dissolve and become free of the conflicts of oriented space. Desire, for example, is a form of inten-

tionality. It is a form of interest, a way of orienting and investing body and energy in the world. Like emotions, it is also a form of mind. The mind is not an immaterial ghost or thing that inhabits a soft machine. Mind is a certain power for investing attention in and taking hold of the world bodily. Mind is not a static thing; it is a way of spatializing and orienting attention toward the things of the world. Mind is not something we have, it is something we do. Mind is really a bodying-forth and a concerned *minding* of the world.

Desire is a way of minding the things of the world and bodily investing interest and energy in them. Each kind of desire brings with it its own type of object of satisfaction. Artistic desire is interested in and satisfied by the beauties of art and nature. Perverted desire creates and desires perverted objects.

For example, the anti-body, anti-sexual traditions of our world have unwittingly created the fascination, demand, and need for pornography. The desire for pornography is created by an anti-sexual, anti-body upbringing. As Wilhelm Reich clearly understood, often those most against pornography are those most responsible for it. Often both those who want pornography and those who want to suppress it come from the same sort of anti-sexual environment. Until the conflicted space of perverted desire is dissolved in allowing, the oxymoronic idiocy of a "Playboy philosophy" and the devastation of sexual abuse will never go away.

Our world projects and supports, partly by means of the media and popular music, the most diverse and bizarre forms of conflicted desire. From hardcore pornography to television soap operas and sitcoms, we witness the most foolish and abusive interactions and take them for normal. Conflicted desire and intentionality is obvious everywhere we look. However, in allowing, when you break up any form of conflicted desire you automatically break up the attractiveness and addictive qualities of those objects and fantasies that seem to satisfy that conflicted desire. What was once interesting, fascinating, exciting, and attractive to conflicted desire becomes

foolish, boring, or simply uninteresting to unconflicted desire. By means of the power of allowing, for example, sexuality can finally be liberated and become a truly unfettered and powerful force that can transform lovers instead of imprisoning them. Only allowing gives rise to unconflicted willing and desire, to another way of living. Through allowing we simply outgrow our conflicts and limitations. The allowing-will is, therefore, the achievement and realization of transformation, creativity, freedom, and integrated action.

Transformation

Another way to describe the nature of transformation is to say that it begins with the experience of distinguishing the core from the surface. Distinguishing the core from the surface is the same as distinguishing the true self from the ego-self, or allowing from willing. Once core and surface or allowing and willing have been differentiated in experience, it then becomes possible to ground willing *in* allowing. Allowing and willing can become integrated as the allowing-will. In the end, there is no freedom of the will unless it emerges from the freedom of allowing.

Allowing has many levels. It is at the very center of any creative endeavor. It is, moreover, the spaciousness of love through which any form of healing must occur. Although our culture does not understand its importance, allowing is the surrendering of the core free of the conflicts of the human body-self. If this surrender goes deep enough, you will discover the true self at the very root of your personality. If it goes deeper yet, all of what you experience as “you” will dissolve into radiantly presencing spaciousness. At the end of this process, the whole illusion of inner and outer finally disappears.

Because it is next to impossible to realize *that* which has always been spaciously awake and free when we are looking through the eyes of our conflicted body-selves, this last characterization of allowing is the most difficult to understand. Prior to but not separate from the looking, hearing, and feeling of our unique and indi-

vidual body-self is a seeing, listening, nonpreferential love that knows no place or hindrance, but which embraces and is embraced by our bodies and the whole world of form. In the end, allowing transcends without leaving behind the very structure of oriented space. It transcends intentionality, that fundamental structure of our being in the world, of our body-mind. Intentionality simply evaporates, without anxiety, into an ecstatic scintillating openness which is never apart from the world of form and yet never identical to it.

Notes

1. See, for example, my articles "Creativity" in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (Vol. XXXIV, No. 4, Summer, 1976), pp. 397-409; and "Creative Performance: The Art of Life" in *Research in Phenomenology* (Vol. X, 1980), pp. 278-303.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Architecture of Freedom and the Harmony of Being

We were three days into another Zen retreat. The meditation hall was dark and cold. As the allowing of each person deepened in meditation, the group space began to crackle with the energy and intensity of silence heaped upon silence. But for some reason during this particular retreat, every time an opening into spaciousness would begin to occur, minds would wander. Once more the endless parade of conflicting thoughts, desires, and fantasies replaced the emerging openness and clarity. The supermundane was lost again in the mundane. Willfulness, dullness, and confusion clouded and distorted the vastness of unconflicted space. Without warning and from no particular place Roshi's voice filled the hall, "If you must think, think with your belly!"

Thinking with Your Belly

The more I threw myself away in Zen, the more I understood what Roshi meant. Because the models by which we ordinarily try to understand body, mind, and soul are so crude we too easily distort the reality of who we are. We either see division where there is only unity, or blur diversity with a fantasy of false unity. Without having had an experience of thinking with your belly, it is not easy to comprehend Roshi's command. Most of what passes for thinking

in our culture is mere head-thinking: conflicted thinking that is not grounded in authentic experience. By its very nature, head-thinking is cut off from free, whole-body experience, feeling, and energy. It is a way of reflectively pursuing the truths of conventional reality by defending ourselves against the truth of what is.

As I was trying to find a way to explain thinking with your belly, I read Heidegger's explanation of phenomenology in *Being and Time*.¹ "Phenomenology" is made up of two words: "phenomenon" and "logos." "Phenomenon" means "that which shows itself" and "logos" means "the site at which being reveals itself." Phenomenology is therefore the attempt to describe or interpret any phenomena you choose (emotions, body, time, art, nature; anything, in fact, that shows itself to human awareness) as it truly shows itself. Generally, phenomenology attempts to describe what shows itself without imposing any inappropriate conceptual framework on the experience. For example, the view that the body is simply a soft machine is a way of imposing a mechanistic framework on the experience of the lived-body, and is thus a way of misdescribing it.

Here you might very well ask, "Is it possible to experience what shows itself as it truly shows itself without contaminating your experience of it with your own biases?" Heidegger holds that "logos" does not mean "the study of," "logic," or "the word," but rather "the site at which being reveals itself." To simplify the history of phenomenology a bit, unlike Husserl (the father of phenomenology who wrote in the early part of the twentieth century) and his followers, Heidegger insisted you can never take a God-like survey of any phenomenon. Because the experience of what shows itself always takes place within its own unique context, you can never give a pure noncontextual description of anything. You can only interpret it. To try to describe a phenomenon without its context is not to experience it as it shows itself. Part of the discipline of phenomenology consists in laying bare the presuppositions and biases that are embedded in the contextualized field in which we always find ourselves. To do phenomenology is to prereflectively

let what is show itself as it shows itself contextually, and then to appropriately interpret it reflectively.

To expand Heidegger's point and to put it in my own terms, the logos of phenomenology essentially is allowing. Allowing is the site at which being is revealed. In this sense, phenomenology is philosophy from the core. It is the love of spaciousness that attempts, by means of the will, to interpret what is revealed in allowing. It is the ability to prereflectively experience and to feel without conflict into what is. By opening an unconflicted space within which *this* is revealed, the reflective interpretations of phenomenology come to rest upon an understanding that participates with what is understood.

When the Zen teacher says to think with your belly, he means to think with your whole being, body and all, free of the conflicts of the unwilling-will. Unlike Heidegger, Zen is fully aware of the importance of the body to transformation. If you let your awareness sink into your belly, or the *hara* as the Japanese call it, you will eventually discover that your belly is actually a gateway to the core. Thus, the recommendation to think with your belly is fundamentally a demand to transform your life. Since the logos of phenomenology is allowing, you cannot truly do phenomenology unless you are continually transformed, body and all, by the very doing of phenomenology. This is the true nature of philosophy and anything short of it is mere head-thinking.

When I first read Heidegger, I immediately sensed that he was working his way toward articulating what I was understanding through Zen. It was also immediately obvious to me that most academic philosophers and phenomenologists had very little grasp of the true nature of philosophy, and that, for the most part, the academic mind wanted nothing to do with the allowing logos. Unfortunately, what our culture and educational systems value the most is head-thinking. This is not surprising. Head-thinking seems much safer and more comfortable than belly-thinking's relentless and uncompromising demand for transformation.

A few years later, when I was being Rolfed, I became fascinated with the structure of the academic body. As the conflicts in my own flesh and life melted under my Rolfer's hands, I gained greater clarity about the structure of my world. Often when discussing philosophy with my colleagues or graduate students after a Rolfing session my neck would start hurting. Sometimes I would even end up with a stiff neck for a few days. At the time this seemed very odd to me. So I began observing myself and others during philosophical discussions.

I discovered that as soon as the conversation degenerated into the head-thinking of academic philosophy, which was usually almost immediately, my neck would shorten a bit and my head would go slightly forward and down. In order to understand the significance of this movement, I exaggerated it. To my fascination I felt like I was imitating Richard Nixon, and I noticed that I looked like some of the older professors I knew. I also noticed a restriction at the level of my diaphragm which affected free breathing. If I really let myself into it, my thorax would fall back a bit as my belly pooched forward and I would feel some anger and hostility as I defended my philosophical position and made my "critical points." Sometimes, when I was defending a point (i.e. defending myself), my lower back would hurt and I soon realized that my low back was where I held much of my suppressed anger.

As Rolfing gave me a less conflicted psychospacial orientation, I was able to experience with painful clarity the nature of head-thinking. Although structural details vary from person to person, my head-thinking generally involved a shortening of the neck, displacement of the thorax and pelvis, restriction of the diaphragm, and an inappropriate, disguised discharge of suppressed anger or feeling—all in the name of doing philosophy! The descriptions of philosophy courses in most university catalogues, for example, call this type of thinking an intensive and critical examination of some problem in philosophy. I have come to call it misery-thinking.

The more I looked, the more I realized that head-thinking is

the only kind of thinking that most people know. Our culture values conflicted, reflective thinking above authentic thinking. Head-thinking is obviously not limited to professors of philosophy; we have all been taught to think with our heads at the expense of free, whole-body experience. We block and distort our emotions, feelings, and energy. We then confuse these distorted ways of being and not feeling with being rational. As I pointed out earlier, to understand means “to come into agreement with,” or “to become congruent with.” Without fully realizing it, we try to understand what our teachers present to us by creating the space in our own bodies that matches the conflicted space of our teachers’ minds.

Since head-thinking or conflicted reflective thinking is so pervasive, it is not surprising that the intellectuals of our culture angrily dismiss the authentic thinking of Zen as a matter of dispensing with thought altogether. Not only would such a program be ludicrous, it would also be impossible. Head-thinkers also have the same sort of difficulty grasping Heidegger’s elucidation of the logos of authentic thinking. They often judge it to be antirational nonsense. But the choice is not between thinking and not thinking, or between being rational or irrational. The choice is between reflective thinking that is grounded in prereflective allowing, and conflicted reflective thinking that arises from the psychospacial and psychotemporal conflicts of the unwilling-will.

What I learned and experienced through Zen and Heidegger about the true nature of thinking was brought home to me with even greater clarity as my own body released its conflicts during my Rolfing sessions. In her book *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures*, Dr. Rolf cautions against an educational system based on what I have called head-thinking:

[A] man’s overall vital or psychic competence is determined not by the individual energy level of any one component system (e.g. the head, the nerves) but by the functioning of all as they interrelate in the total somatic individual. It means specifically that training the nervous system in an effort to produce a superior person cannot be

successful. Part of the general malaise of our culture is the overstimulation of the nervous system. If the nervous system is successfully to survive the educational, nutritional and other demands made on it in our current culture, it must be supported from other quarters. Structural somatic balance can add this support.²

Later in the book, Dr. Rolf reports a wonderful response from an eight-year-old girl. Asked how she was feeling after her Rolfig session, she said: "Oh, fine. I used to live in my head, but now I live all over me."³

The Creative Appropriation of Gravity

Before my own experience with Rolfig, I was aware that transformation could not happen without the transformation of the body. I had developed the concept of the allowing-will before I found Rolfig, but I had not grounded it in the body. Because of my experiences with Zen and because I was aware of phenomenology's revolutionary work on the lived-body, I suspected the importance of the body. But my understanding was incomplete. Experiencing the results of Rolfig in my own body gave me some of the answers. The more I studied and experienced Rolfig, the more I understood.

Based on my experience of Zen, I had complained for years about the endless conflicted head-thinking of Western philosophy and how it needed to be grounded in a transformational practice. To my great astonishment and delight, I realized that Dr. Rolf had developed a practical phenomenology, a science and philosophy grounded in the reality of the human body. It was obvious to me that academic philosophy often served interests foreign to philosophy and that Zen was simply too demanding for most people and beyond my ability to teach. But Dr. Rolf's school of thought provided a systematic and powerful way of transforming people's lives by transforming their bodies. I knew from my own experience that Rolfig was a radical philosophical, scientific, and practical approach to the difficulties of human embodiment. (In this context, I mean

the word “radical” in its original sense: “to return to the root.”)

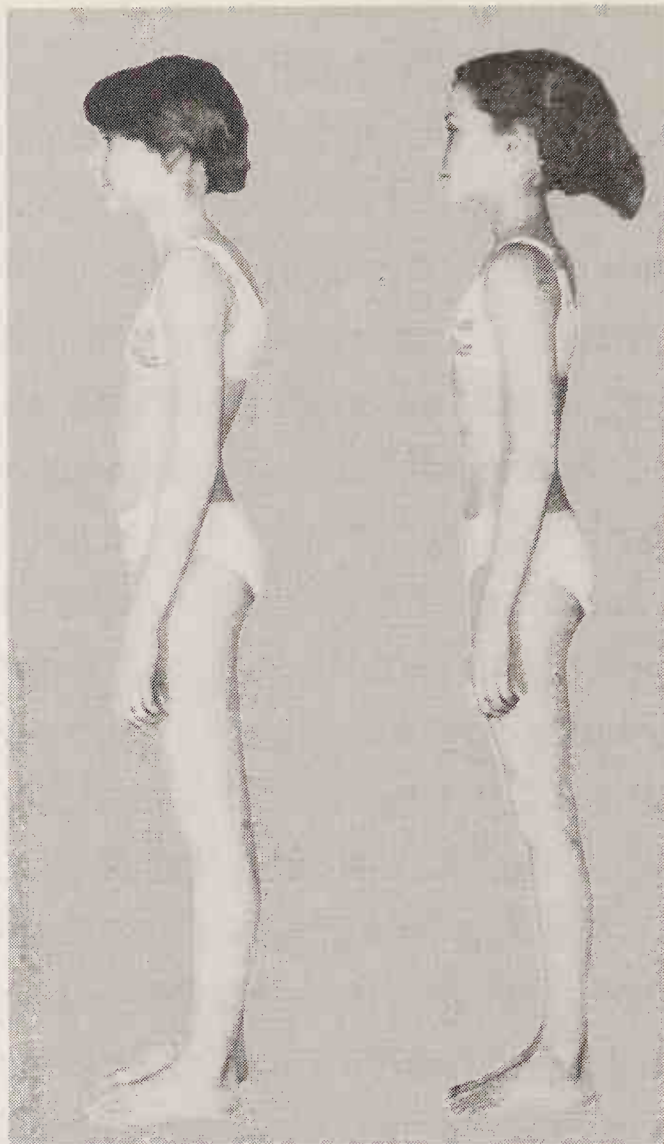
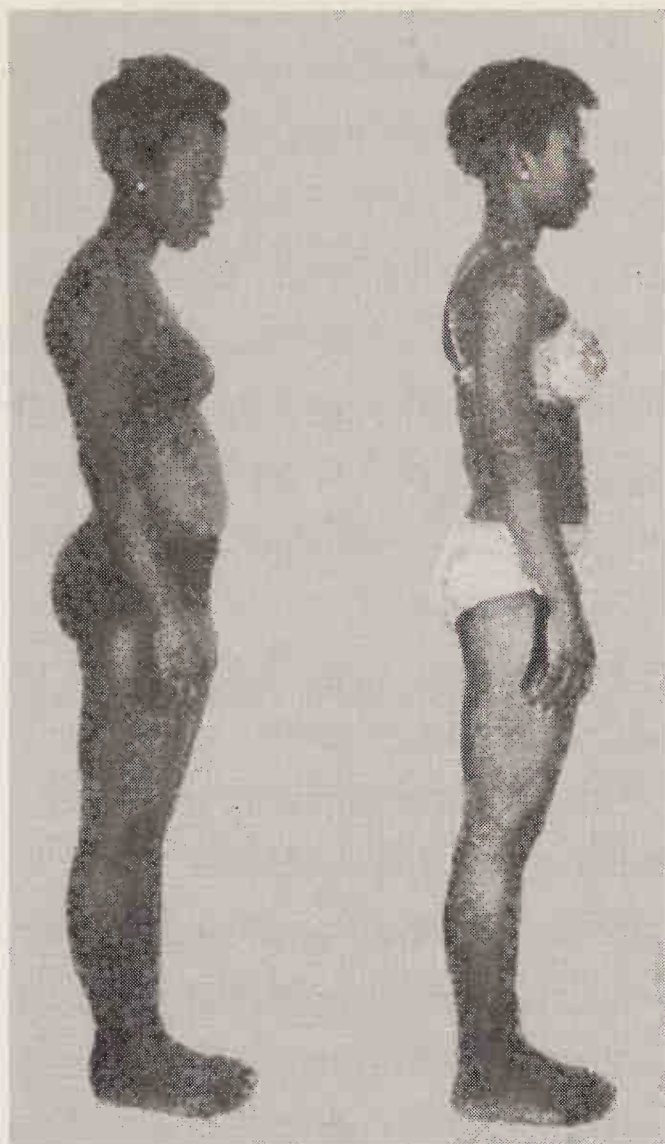
Dr. Rolf’s vision was broad and deep. She saw the need to explore her work from the viewpoints of philosophy, medical science, and psychology. Her life’s work was devoted to the philosophical and scientific investigation into the conditions which must be fulfilled in order for the body-person as a whole to function optimally. Rolfing is easy enough to define: it is the philosophy, science, and art of structurally, functionally, and energetically integrating the human body-person in space-time and gravity through myofascial manipulation and movement education. But because her vision of the body is so radical, it cuts against so many of the unspoken and false assumptions we have about our bodies. Rolfing seems to undermine what we all “know to be true” about our bodies, and so its profound simplicity and obviousness is often missed.

As I have suggested throughout this book, the lived-body is not in any simple or reductive sense a mere material thing. But like any material thing, our bodies are subject to the ever-present force of gravity. No two of us are completely alike, yet we all stand and live in relationship with gravity, whether we are aware of it or not.

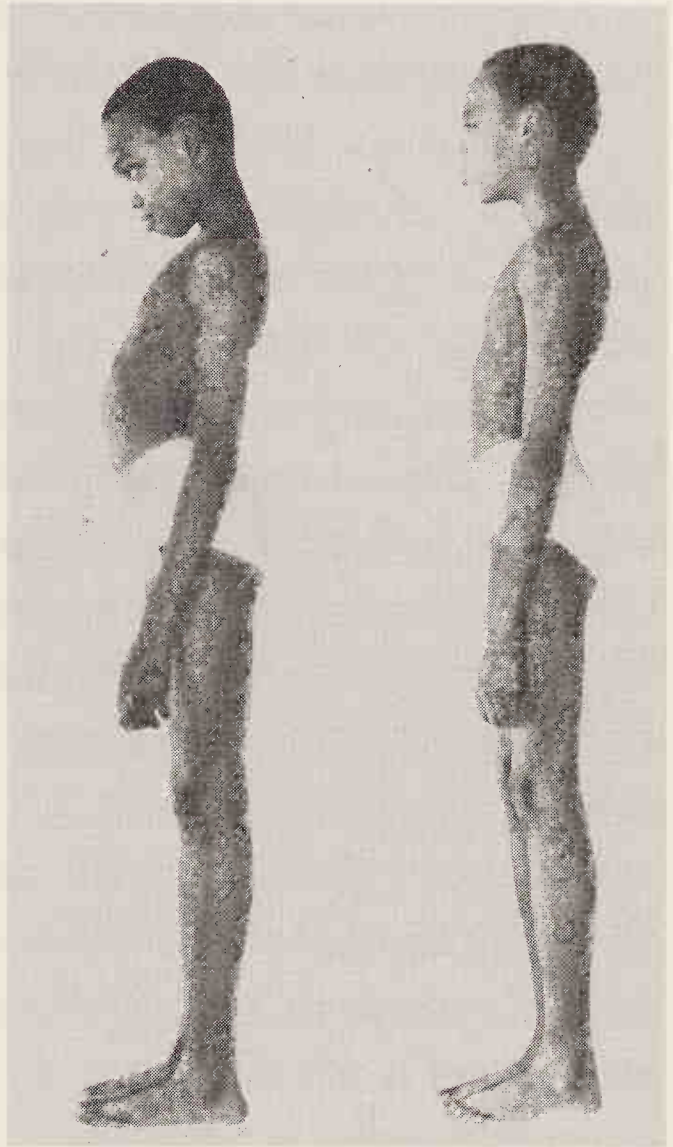
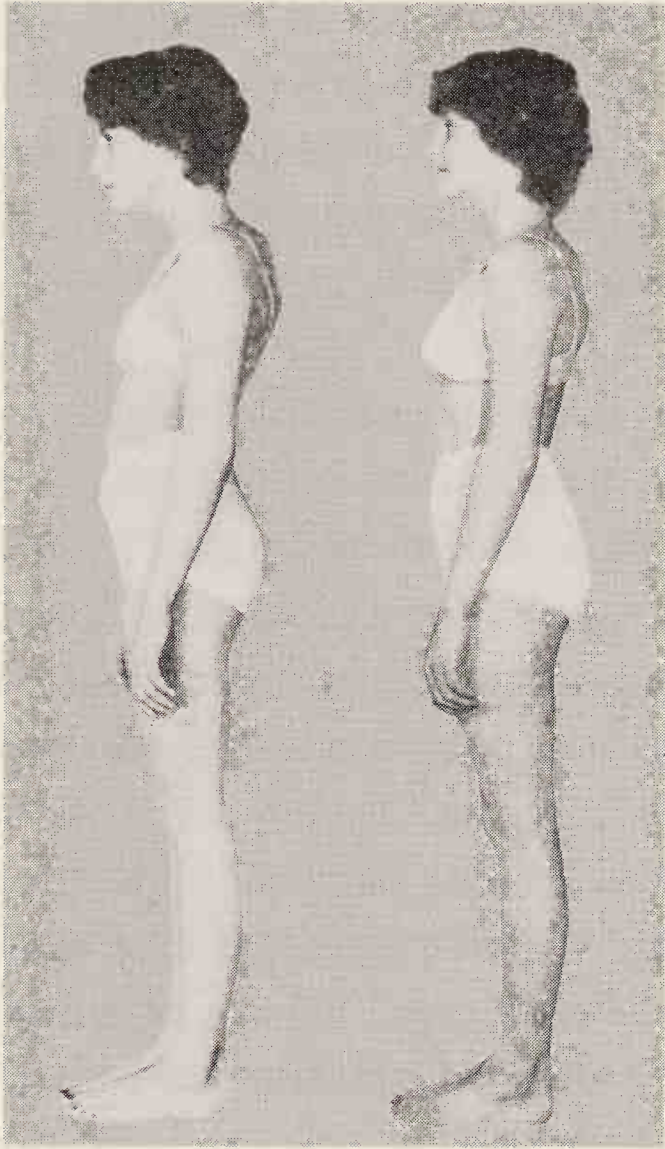
How many times have you seen an old barn collapsing under the force of gravity? Perhaps you don’t have the skills to right its condition, but you know and can see that the barn has lost its architectural integrity. More than likely, you have a pretty good idea as to how it should look if someone were to repair it. But what about the human body—your body, my body, and the bodies of others—how should they look? What does the human body look like when it has or lacks some degree of architectural integrity? What does the structure of a well or poorly functioning body look like?

In the accompanying photographs, all the “before” pictures display bodies that are losing the struggle with gravity. You don’t need the training of a Rolfer to see that each person has improved for the better after Rolfing. At one level, all of these people are approaching equipoise by having been organized around a central vertical axis, called the line of gravity.

SPACIOUS BODY



Each person in the “before” half of the photograph uniquely displays a rather common struggle with gravity. In one way or another, this struggle manifests in varying patterns of strain in the muscles and connective tissue of the body. These strain patterns, in turn, interfere with each person’s ease of movement. This struggle also shows up as varying degrees of stress, pain, and stiffness which subtly undermine each person’s sense of freedom and well-being. This struggle is not the only pattern you will see, but it is one you will see everywhere. Notice how often people’s legs are situated somewhat behind their bodies. Because their legs are not directly under them, they are not supporting the upper body properly. As the legs go behind the body, the pelvis, in order to counterbalance, falls forward. In turn, the thorax, in order to counterbalance the pelvis, falls back. And finally, the head, in order to counterbalance the thorax, goes forward.



Everywhere you look, people's bodies display the ongoing struggle with gravity and form. Limitation, as I have already pointed out, is at the very heart of existence. Limitation and form mutually implicate each other. Limitation in the form of the lived-body provides the very structure by which we can be at all. Perhaps the most ubiquitous limitation, and the one we never consider when it comes to our bodies, is gravity.

The unique ways in which your body must respond to the uncompromising presence of gravity throughout all your daily activities is greatly determined by and reflected in the unique shape, form, and structure of your body and your life. When the balance and order in our body's structure is compromised, the ways we move, how we feel, our sense of freedom, and our well-being are also compromised. Can you imagine how the children in these pictures might have looked, moved, and felt in fifty years if they had

not been Rolfed? You can already sense in the child the tired, old person stiffened and in pain from the war with gravity.

Gravity may be, in fact, the most fundamental condition of form itself. If you could imagine a universe without gravity, you would have to imagine a universe without form — a universe that would be no universe at all.

Feel and project yourself prereflectively into each of the “before” photos. Can you sense the misery, the pain, the anger, the depression, the defeat, the resentment, the loss of personal power, and other feelings as they come to presence in these pictures? What I have called a conflicted psychospacial orientation is observable. It is displayed all too clearly by these people’s structures and their relation to gravity.

The struggle with gravity and form is the human struggle. Our fondest theories about freedom and the transformation of consciousness are empty fantasies unless we recognize that freedom at every level is always a matter of liberating our bodies. And liberating our bodies is a matter of creatively appropriating gravity. We cannot change gravity, but Dr. Rolf discovered and created a system of manipulation and movement education that can transform the way our bodies move and balance by transforming our relation to gravity.

Science has known for years that proper physiological function and anatomical structure are related. Other systems of manipulation, such as osteopathy and chiropractic, were created and based on this insight before Dr. Rolf began her revolutionary quest, and Dr. Rolf was greatly influenced by osteopathy. She agreed that the body as a whole functioned better when local areas of dysfunction were resolved, when bony segments were in proper alignment, and when joints exhibited proper mobility. But she realized that a long-lasting and profound transformation in our bodily being, alignment, and overall sense of well-being and freedom required a more far-reaching understanding of the impact of gravity on our bodies. Where other systems only paid “lip service” to the importance of

gravity and the need for a wholistic approach, Dr. Rolf devoted all of her energy to creating a system that successfully organized the whole body in gravity.

Resolution of local areas of dysfunction, joint mobility, and individual alignment of bony segments were important to her, but only as necessary stepping-stones toward the larger task of aligning the whole body-structure in gravity. Dr. Rolf was not only concerned with creating a system of manipulation that could ease the pains and stresses of human life by properly aligning the body, she was also profoundly interested in creating a system that could transform the whole person at every level. Beginning with the insight that the human body is a unified structural and functional whole that stands in a unique relation to the uncompromising presence of gravity, Dr. Rolf asked this fundamental question: "What conditions must be fulfilled in order for the human body-structure to be organized and integrated in gravity so that it can function in the most economical way?"

Dr. Rolf's question has profound implications beyond the obvious therapeutic effects of her discoveries. Limitation is the condition of form and freedom, and the relationship between our lived-body-form and gravity provides part of the fundamental set of limitations in terms of which human life becomes possible. Remove the limitations of body-form and gravity and what you call your self would cease to be. Our freedom, therefore, is not to be found in any sort of illusory heavenly realm free of our earthly existence, bodies, and all limitation.

Contrary to what many disturbed philosophers and religious teachers have maintained, there is no freedom in unlimited possibility. When limitation limits us too severely, we experience ourselves in opposition to our bodies and the earth. We may fall prey to the illusory freedom of unlimited possibility which seeks freedom in opposition to our earthly and bodily existence. Or we may be tempted to embrace a nihilistic philosophy which sees death as the last and ultimate insult to an already meaningless existence. The

alienation and dis-ease of our times is directly perceivable in our body-structures. It also manifests in our frantic search for meaning and peace outside and everywhere else but where we always and already bodily are. Dr. Rolf's solution to the human dilemma was not simply to free up this or that stiff, tight, or painful spot, but to integrate and order our bodies so that we are no longer at war with ourselves and the earth.

To express Dr. Rolf's discovery in my terms, I would say that she found a way to creatively appropriate gravity and the limitations of human form. We cannot find real freedom by fighting, resigning ourselves to, or fleeing from the limitations of form. Limitation is the condition of our freedom. Dr. Rolf understood this philosophical truth. She created a system of manipulation and education with the potential to put us on the road to our freedom. At its best, Roling provides the opportunity to uncover our freedom not by creating another way for us to stand in opposition to limitation, but by releasing us *in* limitation, by releasing our bodies *in* gravity.

Having been a Rolfer for many years, and having worked with hundreds of people, I am still continually amazed by the power of Dr. Rolf's vision—of her theories and of the manipulative and movement techniques she developed for aligning bodies. She insisted that gravity was her tool and that many of our chronic problems could be transformed by balancing and organizing a person in gravity. These chronic problems include not only the wide variety of aches and pains from which suffer, but also the emotional and psychological distress so apparent and common in our world. Today, without realizing where the insight originated, many somatic practitioners and therapists are just beginning to speak Dr. Rolf's language of wholism, gravity, and bodily balance. Unfortunately, however, their understanding is still incomplete.

Transform the Sky, Don't Push the Stars

In the history of thought and manipulative therapies, Rolfing is as revolutionary and unprecedented as the human body is to the rest of the animal kingdom. Just as the human form has obvious roots in various animal forms, Rolfing has acknowledged roots in homeopathy, yoga, and, most importantly, in the theory and practice of the early osteopaths. The difference between the human body and other animal bodies is not one of degree; the human body, rather, is a creative leap into an unprecedented form. And Rolfing is an unprecedented theory and practice designed to carefully and systematically attend to the unique requirements and problems of our remarkable upright form and its struggle with gravity. It is a whole-body approach to well-being that attempts to organize the body around a central vertical axis, called the “line of gravity,” so that we live in balanced harmony with gravity and move with unencumbered ease.

Metaphorically, Rolfing attempts to transform the sky, not just push the stars. In one way or another, most manipulative systems attempt to change the sky by pushing the stars. The view that optimal health requires proper spinal alignment, for example, is a “star” model. It correctly claims that properly adjusting misaligned vertebrae will reduce pain and possibly enhance our overall health and well-being. In contrast, however, Rolfing is a wholistic, integrative system which attempts to balance and transform the entire context within which all other systems of the body must function, including the spine. Rolfing attempts to change the stars by transforming the sky. It is not a piecemeal, symptomatic approach to aligning body-parts, but a whole-body approach designed to transform the whole. “Star” models of bodily health and well-being have their place and many people have received great relief and help from them. But Rolfing is significantly different in scope and intent than “star” models of manipulation. A fundamental maxim of Rolfing, therefore, is: “Don't push the stars, transform the sky.”

Clearly, a “sky” model is a wholistic model. Today, more than ever before, people have become fascinated with wholism. Health care professionals of every variety are just beginning to speak the language of wholism as wholistic clinics open around the world. Much of what passes for wholistic care, however, is not wholistic at all. Often what is called wholistic care is simply a confused, inchoate combining and juxtaposing of a number of different star models of health care under one roof. Unfortunately, wholism will never result from the mere adding together of star models of health care.

So far I have only discussed the sky and star models of health care. A careful look at the great variety of systems of health care that are practiced throughout the world, from allopathic medicine to shamanism, reveals that there are actually three fundamental, hierarchically related models. These models can be called the three paradigms of practice,⁴ and they underlie all systems of health care, whether they are devoted to the physical, the mental, the spiritual, or all levels at once. In order to understand the full scope of Dr. Rolf’s contribution, we need to appreciate the differences and relationships between these three paradigms.

The word “paradigm” comes from the Greek *paradeigma*, meaning “pattern.” A paradigm is a highly structured way of perceiving, valuing, conceiving, and thinking about some aspect of reality. The revolutionary creation of science, for example, gave rise to the mechanistic paradigm. Through the lens of this paradigm, the Western world now tends to view all of nature as a vast machine to be understood according to causal laws which are articulated in the language of mathematics. We did not always look at nature and the body this way, and many cultures throughout the world still do not.

Because the mechanistic paradigm has attained the status of common sense in the Western world, very few people ever question its truth. Unfortunately, our medicine, anatomy, physiology, and most forms of hands-on therapies are all based on the unexamined assumption, first put forward by Descartes and later championed by Newtonian physics, that the body is nothing but a soft

machine. Because the mechanistic paradigm seems like common sense and is at the heart of our established systems of health care, any system that does not embrace mechanism seems to be nothing more than speculative nonsense. Every attempt to articulate a wholistic theory and practice seems already doomed to incoherence because so many of the concepts used to refer to the body carry the meanings given to them from the established mechanistically oriented life sciences. Laying out the three paradigms will take us part of the way toward understanding not only Rolfing, but any “sky” model of health care. It will also assist us in transcending the limited conceptual framework of our mechanistically oriented medicine.

The first paradigm of practice can be called the relaxation paradigm. Any practice of health care that falls under this paradigm is oriented toward promoting health and well-being by creating the relaxation response. The ability of relaxation practitioners to directly treat pain, disease, dysfunction, and structural problems is quite limited and clearly outside the scope of their training and practice. Typical examples of relaxation practices are some forms of massage and biofeedback.

The second paradigm of practice can be called the corrective paradigm. Practices that fall under this paradigm aim at the symptomatic and often piecemeal treatment of disease, pain, dysfunction, and structural problems. Typical examples of corrective practices that do not treat disease would include most forms of physical therapy, chiropractic and osteopathic manipulation, deep tissue and deep muscle massage therapies, and myofascial release therapies. Allopathic medicine, whose scope of practice obviously includes the diagnosis and treatment of disease, is also a corrective practice. Although corrective practices need not be based on the mechanistic paradigm, in point of fact, the great majority of Western corrective practices are based on, conceptually supported by, and embrace the mechanistic paradigm. Since these practices assume that the body is a soft machine composed of parts, it is not surprising that

many of these practitioners have little or no grasp of the nature of our lived-bodily-being or of wholistic and preventative medicine.

The third paradigm of practice is the wholistic paradigm. Practices that belong to this paradigm are devoted to enhancing the functioning of the whole person—body, mind, and spirit. The symptomatic remediation of disease, pain, dysfunction, and structural disorders is obviously not the focus of this paradigm. Nevertheless, because of the all-encompassing nature of the wholistic approach, the remediation and correction of disease, pain, and dysfunction are more often than not the welcomed and expected outcome of balancing and organizing the whole person.

Every wholistic approach, each in its own way, enhances a system or number of systems that is fundamentally important to the organization, structure, function, and well-being of the whole person. Two examples of such fundamental systems are the myofascial system in relation to gravity which is the focus of Rolfing, and the energy systems which are the focus of many disciplines in Oriental medicine.

Wholistic systems recognize that the distinctions we make between body, mind, spirit, structure, and energy are not terms that refer to separate parts, but are terms that denote various aspects of the unitary whole we are. Energy, for example, always takes place as structure, and structure is already an energetic event. You do not have a structure or a body, and you do not have energy—you are your body-structure-energy.

Homeopathy is an example of a wholistic practice that is oriented toward the treatment of disease through the use of remedies designed to stimulate our bodies to throw off deep patterns of disease. Even though many contemporary practitioners of osteopathic medicine and chiropractic manipulation have abandoned their wholistic roots, the originators of these practices clearly understood their work as wholistic.

These paradigms are not exclusive and opposed to one another. The divisions between them are neither arbitrary nor rigid. In the

hands of many practitioners, various approaches from all three paradigms are often employed and overlap. Although the paradigms are not in opposition to each other, they nevertheless are hierarchically related. Third-paradigm approaches can and often do accomplish the work of first- and second-paradigm approaches. Second-paradigm approaches can accomplish the work of the first paradigm, but not the work of the third. If a second-paradigm approach appears to have accomplished the work of a third-paradigm approach, the effect is accidental. First-paradigm approaches cannot, except accidentally, accomplish the work of second- and third-paradigm approaches. Before some people are able to respond to a third-paradigm approach, they may require some preparation in the form of first- and second-paradigm approaches.

You probably noticed that within many corrective and wholistic systems, some practices, like allopathic and homeopathic medicine, are mainly devoted to the treatment of disease; others, like physical therapy and Rolfing, are mainly devoted to structural/functional issues. No one system of healing, no matter how theoretically comprehensive, is capable of handling every dysfunction for every person. There are practical limitations in every system. On occasion, Rolfing may sometimes release people from disease. But such results are rare, unpredictable, and very poorly understood. The primary goal of Rolfing is to organize the body in gravity in order to transform the well-being and functioning of the whole person at whatever levels the person is prepared to accept. Homeopathy will sometimes profoundly affect a person's structure in allowing health to happen, but it cannot organize the body in gravity.

Among wholistic systems, Rolfing is unique in theory and practice. Whereas most wholistic practices aim at balancing and integrating the whole person with respect to himself or herself, Dr. Rolf added a further requirement. She insisted that not only must the whole body-structure be balanced and organized with respect to itself, but it also must be balanced and organized with respect to its environment. From her perspective, no wholistic system is complete

unless it takes account of our relationship to gravity. In a real sense, the results of Rolfing must always be measured against the absolute reference of gravity. Dr Rolf tried to impress this point on her students by saying, "Gravity is the therapist, not the Rolfer."

Because the mechanistic paradigm so thoroughly infects our thinking about living wholes, it is difficult to find a clear understanding of wholism. And without a grasp of the wholistic perspective, the revolutionary nature of Rolfing cannot be fully appreciated. You may have heard people use the phrase "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" as a way to express an understanding of wholism. Unfortunately, this phrase maintains a commitment to the mechanistic notion of the body as a complex thing made of many discrete parts, and, therefore, completely misses the obvious wholeness of living beings.

Living bodies are not soft machines or complex-things made of thing-parts. They are unified living wholes that are in unique relationships with their environments. In the language of systems theory, the body is a living unified system in which no one system is more fundamental to the makeup and organization of the whole than the whole itself. Certainly, some systems are more important to the continued life of the body than others. Destroy the heart, for example, and you have destroyed the life of the body. But, no one system is more fundamental to the whole than any other.

Since there are no parts to the body, there are no fundamental building blocks of which the body is constructed. What we call a bone, a cell, or an organ are not single elements or parts, but entire systems. Thus, every system belongs to some other system or set of systems, every system is made up of other systems, and the forces and relations between systems are themselves systems. To make the same point in the language of relationship, the body is not a collection of parts, but a living relationship in which all relationships are related: every relationship is an aspect of other relationships, every relationship is made up of other relationships, and the forces between relationships are also relationships.

To this concept of the body as a relationship of relationships, Rolfing adds one more all-important, ever-present relationship—the relationship with gravity. The human body, as a relationship in which all relationships are related, relates and functions best when it relates well in its relationship with gravity. You are the living whole you are, functioning and being the way you are, in relation to the larger whole of your environment which is also an aspect of who and what you are.

Because the human body is a unified living whole, which functions best when integrated in gravity, the meaning and use of the word “structure” in the Rolfing wholistic theory and practice is quite different from its use in corrective and mechanistic theories and practices. In mechanistic and corrective approaches to the body, “structure” is misunderstood as “body-part.” However, since the body is already whole and thus not composed of parts, Rolfing does not and cannot aim at aligning body parts. Rather, Rolfing aims at aligning and integrating your whole body both with respect to itself and gravity. Every intervention performed by a Rolfer must take account of and affect the body as whole in relation to gravity. Every intervention must affect our body as a relationship of relationships, which includes the relationship with gravity.

Every reference to a segment or component of the body, whether a bone, muscle, or organ, is already an abstraction from the whole. The theory and practice of Rolfing, therefore, understands the concept of “structure” as a system-wide relationship which stands in a profoundly uncompromising relationship with gravity. The organization and functioning of your whole body-structure in gravity determines the organization and functioning of any individual structure, and the organization and functioning of any individual structure determines the organization and functioning of your whole structure in gravity.

Think about one of the joints in your body. By wholistic implication, whatever joint you choose is connected to the rest of your body. It is not just the simple coming together of bony and carti-

laginous body-parts. Your body is organized and moves through space in its own unique way because of the way that particular joint structure is organized and functions, and that particular joint functions the way it does because of the way your body as a whole is organized in gravity and forced to move through space.

The truth of these observations usually only becomes painfully obvious to us when we have injured ourselves. If you are like most people, when asked to think about one of your joints, you probably thought about a joint in your extremities or spine that gives you trouble. If you are unfortunate enough to have a troublesome joint or two, you may have a clear experience of how the unified whole you are in relation to gravity can be thrown into compensatory disharmony throughout your body.

Clearly, Rolfing is not a second-paradigm, corrective practice that attempts to align body-parts. Nevertheless, when a body is structurally integrated in gravity according to the principles of Rolfing, it will appear to exhibit the proper alignment of body-parts to the eyes, hands, and conceptual frameworks of second-paradigm practitioners. This recognition, however, does not justify reducing the Rolfing concept of “structure” to the concept of “body-part.” “Structure” in Rolfing theory and practice is always understood as a system-wide relationship. Structure also is always considered from the point of view of integrating our whole body in gravity in order to create better function.

Fascia: The Relationship in which All Relationships are Related

In fascia, a tough but elastic form of connective tissue found everywhere in the body, Dr. Rolf discovered a whole new level of plasticity. By taking advantage of fascia’s ability to maintain and change form, she discovered she could radically alter the structure of the body. She possessed an uncanny ability to perceive whole-body alignment and misalignment in gravity as it displayed itself in the

complicated patterns of fascial strain. When she put her discoveries together with her remarkable powers of observation, Rolfing was born.

Of all the tissues and structures of the body, fascia in conjunction with the bones is probably most responsible for each of our unique forms. Almost like a kind of sculpting, Rolfing attempts to enhance the functioning and architectural integrity of your body by working directly with the fascia.

If you have ever cut up meat or skinned an animal you have seen fascia. A chef I Rolfed said, “Oh, what you call fascia is what I’ve always called ‘silver skin.’” Do you remember the last time you cut up some red meat? Perhaps you didn’t cut all the way through some pieces. When you tried to pull it apart, did you notice the whitish, filmy stuff that holds it all together? That stuff is a form of connective tissue called fascia. For example, except for the amount of minerals they contain, bones, tendons, ligaments, and cartilage are the same sort of stuff as fascia. But unlike any other tissue, fascia is found everywhere in the body. It is truly the tissue of connection.

Though a practical impossibility, if you could leave the fascia intact and remove everything else from the body (bones, nerves, organs, arteries and veins, etc.) you would be left with a kind of three dimensional blueprint of the body—in essence, a fascial body. It would look something like a huge loofa sponge in the shape of your body. In it, you could see where every single bone, nerve, blood vessel, organ, and so forth belongs. Reverse the image for a moment. Imagine that you could remove all the fascia from the body. Aside from the bones and a few other structures, what you would see remaining would be a heap of unrecognizable, formless, organic stuff.

Fascia is a tissue that both surrounds and penetrates all the structures of your body. It is the very stuff that gives form to your body in all of its aspects. Every muscle, for example, is composed of fibers. Every fiber is covered with fascia. Fibers are bundled together by fascia. These bundles are bundled together in more fascia, and

finally the muscle itself is surrounded by fascia. This interconnected relationship of fasciae and muscles is called the myofascial system. The fascia of the muscle grows imperceptibly into a tendon. And tendons grow imperceptibly into cartilage and bone.

Fascia compartmentalizes and connects every aspect of your body. Fascia is the intimate living connection throughout every nook and cranny of your body. It both separates and unifies your entire body. Remove it from an organ and you would no longer recognize what was left as an organ. Remove it from a body and you would no longer recognize what was left as a body. Fascia is even a part of every cell in your body. Recent electron microscope studies by Dr. James Oschman indicate that the ground substance of fascia is connected through proteins to cytoplasm and to a kind of latticed network or "skeleton" inside the cell.⁵

Since fascia is the tissue that connects and separates every aspect of your body, it is the tissue of relationship. A meditation on fascia is also a meditation on relationship, a meditation on life itself. We all too easily misconceive the body as a complex thing or machine that is composed of thing-parts. By means of dissection you can distinguish the heart, lungs, colon and a multitude of other structures. But even at this level, you will not understand what your body is if you see these structures as thing-parts. Your body is not a complex thing composed of simpler things, but a living relationship of mutually-supporting relationships forming and being formed at every moment. Your body is a relationship in which all relationships are related; fascia is the tissue of that relationship. It is the tissue within which all relationships are relating.

What we call an organ, for example, is not a thing but a living relationship. Everything that is alive is a relationship. Only what is not alive can be conceived of as a complex thing composed of thing-parts. Living wholes stand in living relationships and are not made of parts. Because the body is not composed of or built up out of parts, there is nothing more fundamental to the makeup of the whole than the totality of relationship itself.

This notion of living relationship is quite different from the prevailing conception of relationship which arises from the mechanistic approach to life. In mechanistic metaphysics, all relationship is considered to be the result of the interaction of two or more individual things. The individual things are considered primary and the relationship that arises later from their interaction is considered secondary. The mechanistic view of relationship may be an adequate way for science to model some features of the world: you look at a complicated process, reduce it to its simplest parts, show how the parts interact causally, express the relationships in mathematical language, and end up with an explanation of how it works. But the mechanistic view of relationship is a reflective abstraction that is not grounded in prereflective whole-body experience. If you try to describe the authentic experience of touching and being touched, of embracing and being embraced, by means of the mechanistic paradigm, you will miss completely the nature and meaning of our whole-body-being. After all, machines are not capable of embracing and being embraced, of touching and being touched.

Your body is clearly not a complex machine composed of thing-parts. Unlike a machine, if the functioning of any one relationship of your body is disrupted, all the others are thrown into compensatory disruption and your body as a whole responds. Although many people are tempted to compare eating to combustion, the process of metabolism is not sufficiently enough like combustion to support such an analogy. When you put gasoline in your car, you are not nourishing or affecting the tires, windshield, seats, etc. But when you eat, every relationship of your body participates and is transformed in some way.

You can distinguish a number of systems in the body, for example: the muscular, skeletal, nervous, cardiovascular, digestive, respiratory, excretory, endocrine, reproductive, and cellular systems. But while distinguishable in thought, they are not separate units or thing-parts. They are relationships within relationships and there are no clear divisions between them. The cardiovascular,

digestive, and excretory systems are largely muscular. There is no clear division between cartilage and bone, or between fascia and tendons. The discs of the spine are not separate parts, but an integrated structural growth of the spine. A neuromuscular junction is hardly like a railroad junction or an electrical junction. Two cells cut away from the heart when not in contact with each other will beat independently and off-rhythm; however, as soon as they touch, they beat together in unison. Breathing is, in part, a muscular accomplishment, and the body as a whole breathes: cells are nourished and wastes removed; the spine, the bones of the cranium, every muscle and cell joyfully expands, contracts, and rests.

Your body is not a machine. And there is nothing comparable to fascia in any machine. Fascia is the living tissue of whole-body relationship that relates all of the relationships of your body as the whole. Metaphorically, fascia is the sky within which all relationships (stars) must happen. There is no relationship in your body that takes place outside the relationship of fascia. No other structure of your body is this extensive. Every structure of your body is where it is and, in part, shaped and functioning the way it is because of the fascia that surrounds and penetrates it. Conversely, the structure, density, and form that fascia takes varies according to the functioning of the structures it surrounds and penetrates. Like life itself, fascia is the relationship that is embracing and being embraced by relationship: it is the relationship in which all relationship is related.

Dr. Rolf insisted that fascia is as important a communication network as the nervous and endocrine systems. Through fascia, nutrients pass from blood to the cells of other tissues, and metabolites pass back into the capillaries and lymph vessels. All nervous impulses must also flow through fascia. The health and well-being of your body at every level depends on this fluid and nervous flow. When your body is struggling against gravity, it is losing its architectural integrity. When this happens, your fascia thickens and shortens to shore you up against the downward drag of gravity.

Wherever fascial thickening and shortening occurs, vital nervous and fluid flows of your body are hindered.

You are the unique form that you are primarily because of fascia and your relationship with gravity. In response to the demands and limitations of your world and environment, you give form to yourself through fascia. Fascia is the fabric of life and without it and gravity there would be no you at all.

Dr. Rolf was the first person really to explore and understand the relationship between fascia and gravity. One of her most important insights was that fascia in its harmonious interplay with muscles, ligaments, tendons, and bones is part of what allows your body to remain upright in gravity. Unthinkingly, most people assume that the bones allow the body to be upright in gravity. Actually the skeletal system is only part of the story. In order to explain how we are able to remain upright, Dr. Rolf compared the body to a tent. She compared the poles to the bones and the guy-wires and the tent fabric to the myofascial system (the fascia and muscles). What keeps the tent up is not the poles, but the equal pull of the guy-wires and the fabric across the poles. The poles act as spacers across which the guy-wires and fabric can be stretched. In a similar but much more complicated fashion, you are able to remain upright in gravity because your bones act as the spacers across which the myofascial network is stretched. In engineering terms, your body is more like a tensile structure than a compressional structure. In this sense, it is more like a tent or suspension bridge than a stack of blocks or bones.

Your health and well-being at every level are very much a function of the architectural integrity of your body, of the span and balance of the myofascial system within gravity. Distortions and patterns of strain within the fascial network can be the expression of injury, illness, stress, and long-standing psychological and emotional conflicts. Just as a tent will be dragged down by gravity if the guy-wires and fabric lose their appropriate stretch and span, your body will lose its architectural integrity as some muscles and fascia become too tight and others too flaccid.

The entire body is connected through its fascial network. Consequently, lines of stress and strain within any section of fascia can be immediately transmitted throughout the entire fascial network much in the way snagging one thread in a sweater immediately distorts the shape of the entire garment. These patterns of strain in the fascial network contribute to the unique form that your body is and your unique ways of standing, sitting, and moving. Just as a pair of well-worn shoes show the unique impression of your feet and stance, so do these patterns of fascial strain display your unique struggle with gravity. As your body loses its architectural integrity, you are no longer able to balance and hence distribute your weight with ease. Your patterns of movement become more encumbered. Gravity then becomes your invisible enemy. More fascial thickening and shortening occurs as your body tries to shore itself up against the relentless downward drag of gravity. As the structure of your body is further distorted in this way, the potential for being in conflict at every level of your being increases. Whether you acknowledge or deny it, life literally becomes a “drag” and a “downer.”

Describing the architectural integrity or its lack in your body is another way of talking about your unique psychospacial orientation. The struggle with the human condition always manifests as this struggle with form and gravity. To the trained eye, this struggle is obvious in our body's myofascial strain patterns and encumbered patterns of movement.

Dr. Rolf passed on to her students her uncanny ability to see lack of harmonious balance in a body, her profound understanding of what constitutes uprightness and order in a body, and her powerful methods for transforming body-structure through fascial manipulation and movement education. Rolfing achieves its remarkable results by taking advantage of the plasticity of fascia.

Fascia is made up of a colloidal ground substance and collagen fibers which are laid down in it. Fascia shortens and thickens in response to injury, emotional conflict, imbalance, and dis-ease; the ground substance of fascia loses its elasticity and fluidity. Dr. Rolf

discovered that the ground substance of fascia could be softened and lengthened by the intelligent and appropriate application of pressure through her hands.⁶ Through a careful and systematic application of pressure and movement, Dr. Rolf discovered that she could sculpt bodies to a higher level of flexibility, balance, organization in gravity, and economy of function than ever before realized.

Over the years Rolfig has evolved into a gentler and more precise method for releasing and organizing the body at every level. Without resorting to thrusting techniques that break up articular fixations by “popping” bones into place, Rolfig can easily reposition “out of place” vertebrae and other bones in the body with as much precision as any other system of manipulation. As strain patterns in the fascia are gently and systematically eased, bones and the other structures of the body quietly shift back to where they belong as articular fixations dissolve under the intelligent pressure applied by the Rolfer. As articular fixations and myofascial strain and fixation patterns are released through Rolfig, you begin to feel and move differently. You begin to live a spacious, light, fluid, balanced body freer of stress and pain, and more at ease with yourself and gravity. You begin to experience what Rolfers mean by structural integration and functional economy.

In contrast to the goals of Rolfig, consider how our present-day culture understands body aesthetics. At present, there are all kinds of services, from physical fitness videos to plastic surgery, that promise you a new body. When you look at the results of these programs you see hard squatty bodies, skinny bodies with stringy muscles, hypererect bodies with bulging muscles, flat hard tummies, rippling muscles, overdeveloped shoulder girdles with overly narrow waists, tight buns, face lifts, tummy tucks, breast implants, pect and calf implants, and more. Rarely do you see a balanced, ordered person moving with unencumbered ease and in fluid harmony with the limitations of human form.

Our culture projects many images and values of a conflicted, confused, and willful human form. This is obvious if you look at

many contemporary cultural heroes. Because of the great variety of disordered body forms that are paraded before us, it is difficult to find anyone who can recognize a balanced and ordered body-self. As a culture we tolerate and even encourage imbalances and conflicts in our bodies that we would never tolerate in our buildings and machines.

Rolfing is clearly both a new set of techniques for manipulating the body and a new science of the body. Like any true science, it is grounded in philosophy. And this philosophy is grounded in the uniqueness of our human form and its relationship to the earth. To understand Rolfing's radically new standpoint you need only compare it to the ways our tradition has tried to understand being human such as the distortions projected by contemporary culture or the Platonic and Cartesian metaphysics of dis-ease that I have mentioned.

Dancing Limitations

Another interesting place to look for how our culture misunderstands and distorts our bodily being is in the art and aesthetic theory of dance. Since dance so obviously involves the body and its relation to gravity, you would expect to find some understanding of Dr. Rolf's principles. Instead, dance is often theorized as the artful suspension of gravity, as a way of overcoming gravity. Dance in this view represents a longing for release from the "tragedy" of our earthbound existence. Certain kinds of leaps come to represent a momentary epiphany of freedom as the dancer briefly suspends the limitations of human existence by suspending gravity.

Such aesthetic theories and the art forms based on them have serious implications. They are part of the more widely-accepted view that human existence and freedom are defined by being against and in opposition to the earth, that our upright posture is attained by standing in opposition to gravity. There is certainly some empirical justification for this view. If you look at the way most people

stand and move, what you indeed see is opposition to and conflict with gravity and form. Perhaps this conflict with our earthly flesh-and-blood existence is behind our easy readiness to pollute and destroy our environment in the name of progress and profit. But if you open your body to what is around you, you see in the average person conflict and misery. But, as Dr. Rolf liked to say, "Average is not normal."

You cannot define or discover yourself by being in opposition to your own ground. In the extreme, opposing your own ground, opposing the limitations that are the conditions of your very existence, is a good description of schizophrenia, not self-discovery.

Every aesthetic theory, every theory of art, is either implicitly or explicitly also a theory of creativity. A theory of creativity is by its very nature a theory of human freedom. Thus, any aesthetic theory that conceives of art (and hence freedom) as requiring opposition to gravity is really a theory of the *an*-aesthetic—a theory that ultimately rests on our common earthbound experience of dis-ease.

In the metaphysics of dis-ease, freedom is either thought to be impossible, or discovered in the brief epiphanies of peak experiences where, like the dancer, we suspend the limitations of form. But freedom can only be found *in* the limitations of form. To want it any other way is a horrible mistake that supports and nourishes the addictive structure of modern life. An addictive personality does not find freedom in the limitations of form. Not knowing how close freedom is, we seek it outside of ourselves in the illusory suspension of limitation through drugs, sex, or other means.

The practice of freedom and art is the creative appropriation of limitation, not the suspension of or opposition to limitation. With this understanding, you can see that a healthy aesthetics of dance would have to see the dancing body not as opposing or suspending gravity, but as *appropriating* gravity. When a dancer appropriates gravity, the experience is one of being released *in* gravity and form. There are many levels to such an experience, but whether shallow or deep, it is always the experience of freedom—the freedom of

being released and resting in the limitations of form. There is no other place to go to find freedom than right here where you always and already are. And that experience, which is the continual demonstration of great art, is at the very heart of Dr. Rolf's theory and practice.

Dr. Rolf discovered the importance of the obvious: gravity has a profound effect on our bodies. She discovered further that if you align people properly within gravity, you can transform them for the better, possibly at every level of their being. This is no small insight. It cuts against and undermines over 2,000 years of Western thought and religion and much of Eastern thought and religion. Wherever you find civilization, especially in patriarchal cultures, you find the view that freedom, liberation, salvation, or whatever you want to call it can be attained only through denying our bodies, and by implication, the earth.

With Zen-like clarity, Dr. Rolf understood that the peace which everyone seeks is found nowhere else but here, now, *in* the limitations of form. From persistence and genius, she found a way to make gravity work for rather than against our bodies. At one level, peace is peace with gravity and form. By appropriating gravity, Dr. Rolf found a way toward human freedom. With her hands she found a way toward releasing the whole person *in* the limitations of gravity and form. Dr. Rolf made this point by quoting Robert Frost: "You have freedom when you're easy in your harness."

The Shape of Being in Shape

Being released in gravity has many names and levels. I call it the *spacious body* and the *allowing-will*. Some people call it "runner's high." Others say it is like "getting your second wind." Experienced meditators know it as *samadhi*. Out of confusion, some try to reduce it to endorphin production. Creative artists call it "inspiration." The Chinese Taoists call it *wu wei* (the doing of not-doing). Some call it "peak performance." The alchemists called it

the “Elixir of Life” and the “Alchemystical Marriage of Heaven and Earth.” The philosophers of India called it *Soma*. Rolfers call it “Structural Integration and Functional Economy.” Whatever it is called, when our body is released in gravity we function better and more economically at many levels. If you have committed yourself for a long time to a particular discipline, you probably have experienced some level of this elusive experience.

If you are a runner, for example, you may have experienced runner’s high. Do you remember how it occurs? Perhaps your workouts have become a bit of a drag lately. Then, suddenly and without warning, right in the middle of a difficult run, you find yourself liberated, energized, and at ease in your running. Just moments ago you were pushing yourself, using your will to struggle against your body as if it were something separate from you requiring all your effort just to get through the run. Suddenly you are completely at one with your running. Like the wind, you are sailing across the earth with an effortless fluidity. There is no “I” to think about what is happening; there is just running itself. The pain and struggle has evaporated. With the effortless, controlled abandonment of the allowing-will, you feel as if it is you who are being run, not you who is “doing” the running.

Since you cannot will runner’s high, no training techniques or programs in themselves can make it happen. But recall how it feels: your body probably felt fantastically fluid, light, open, free of tension and pain, and free of emotional conflict. Truly, you were in spacious unconflicted whole-body-mind harmony, free of any sense of dis-ease. The unconflicted space of the allowing-will manifests whenever you appropriate the limitations of form. At whatever level it occurs, from peak performance to satori, it always involves the creative appropriation of limitation. In a word, when you are released in gravity, you are released in limitation, resting in form, and at ease in the fullness of time.

Body-mind harmony is very much a matter of how well your body relates to gravity. Science has known for a long time that pos-

ture dramatically affects physiological function and mood. Dr. Rolf carried this understanding a couple of steps further. She saw that when people were released in gravity, ordered around the central vertical line of gravity, they were often able to shed their stiffness, chronic aches and pains, emotional and psychological conflicts. They often began to feel freer and more integrated at every level of their being—from physiological to spiritual. An integrated, flexible, fluid structure is one of the most important conditions for body-mind harmony. In fact, structural order and economy of function is the true shape of being in shape.

After Rolfing establishes a new level of order and economy of function, many athletes report a new-found sense of ease and well-being, greater flexibility, more freedom from pain and injury, and improved performance. Also fascinating is the number of athletes who more and more consistently experience the peak performance of runner's high. By easing the imbalances and strain patterns in the soft tissue of their bodies and introducing a new level of structural order and functional economy, Rolfing gives athletes the chance to stop being their own worst enemy. Prolonged stress or a willful orientation always creates imbalances in your body. You cannot will yourself out of the long-standing imbalances that you structure into yourself. But by removing your imbalances and easing your relation to gravity, Rolfing allows you to function at much higher levels than you might have thought possible.

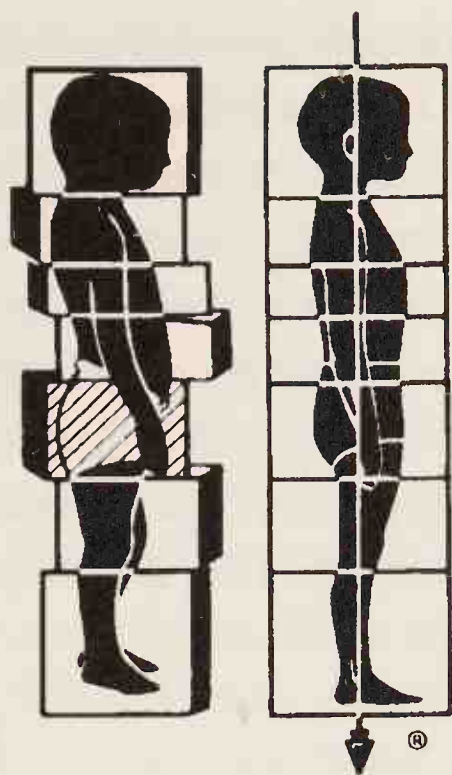
Being released in gravity is no small event for many people. James had been a runner for over twenty years. He was also the CEO of a large company. After years of experiencing high levels of stress that he could no longer discharge through running, his body was beginning to accumulate injuries. He came to Rolfing looking for relief from his stress and pain. After a number of sessions of Rolfing, James reported that the pain from his injuries had disappeared. He also reported, with some excitement, that his running had become an effortless joy in which the infrequent runner's high become more and more frequent. But even more amazing to

him was the fact that he had just breezed through one of the more stressful days of his business career and had emerged that evening feeling clear and full of relaxed energy. James would not have called his experience “the creative appropriation of gravity,” but that is in fact what it was. He would not have said that his body exhibited “structural integration and functional economy,” but that is exactly what his body so elegantly manifested. Being released in gravity and form not only transformed his running, it was beginning to transform his life. He was beginning to understand the true shape of being in shape.

Upright is not Uptight

I have expressed the fundamental vision and experience of Rolfing by saying that Rolfing is the creative appropriation of gravity and fascia. Saying that Rolfing attempts to create structural integration and functional economy, or that freedom cannot be attained apart from appropriate human form, or that the manifestation of appropriate human form is the creative appropriation of limitation, all make essentially the same point. No matter how we articulate the nature and meaning of Rolfing, it is clear that the theory and practice of Dr. Rolf’s system contains a view of what appropriate and inappropriate structure and function look like. Dr. Rolf devoted much time and energy to articulating and trying to display, at many levels, what appropriate form and function look and feel like. Her students and teachers have continued to refine her scientific and phenomenological investigations into articulating and displaying normal structure and normal function.

The following illustration, traced from actual photographs of a little boy who underwent ten sessions of Rolfing, has become the official logo of the International Rolf Institute. The logo displays rather well the long-lasting and often dramatic results of Rolfing. It also gives a good picture of the kind of structural issues with which Dr. Rolf was concerned.



Integrating your body structure within the field of gravity can be described and understood in many different and complementary ways. At one level, you can see your body as a living, moving, architectural structure that must deal with gravity like any material thing. Many of the same conditions apply. Architectural integrity of a body or building requires that some similar conditions are fulfilled. Whether we are looking at a house or a body, both ought to be prop-

erly balanced in gravity and both structures should exhibit well-established horizontals and verticals.

Dr. Rolf argued that balancing the body in gravity is accomplished by organizing the body around a central vertical axis, called the line of gravity. She saw this line as one of the most important hallmarks of structural integration. She called it *The Line*, for short.

Here's how it works. Imagine that you could cut your body into a number of thin cross-sections, all neatly stacked in the shape of your body. Next, find the centers of gravity of each cross-section. The center of gravity is the weight center, or the point wherein the weight of all parts of the cross-section exactly balance each other. Then draw a line connecting all the centers of gravity. If your body were perfectly organized in gravity, this line would be straight. The extent to which the line is not straight is the extent to which your body is not organized in gravity.

Another way to look at it is to find the center of gravity for your entire body and drop a straight line down through it. Your center of gravity is located in the pelvis, slightly anterior to the first or second sacral segment. Next, determine the centers of gravity of the major blocks or cross-sections of your body above and below the center of gravity of your entire body. The extent to which the centers of gravity of all the other blocks line up over your body's

center of gravity is the extent to which your body is organized in gravity. If your other blocks do not line up over your body's gravity center, then you have a pretty good idea of which ones must change their position for you to achieve better integration in gravity.

Given this approach, a body organized around the line of gravity is structurally integrated. Unfortunately, this way of understanding the line of gravity falsely assumes that the body is equally dense throughout. It works well with a stack of equally dense cinderblocks, but not so well for the human body. Its use for determining structural integration, therefore, is quite limited. But overall it provides a good beginning for understanding Dr. Rolf's original view of appropriate form.

An organized body will also exhibit an orthogonal order observable as horizontal and vertical lines/planes throughout the body's tissue. Fascial strain patterns are observable as twisting and/or oblique patterns or lines in the tissue. As these lines of fascial strain are eased through Rolfing manipulation, you will actually begin to see horizontals and verticals showing up in the tissue.

When you see a person who displays these horizontal and vertical lines and planes in the tissue, you will also see a characteristic unencumbered ease in all forms of movement. This economy of movement can be described in considerable detail. Furthermore, these patterns of economical movement show up in much the same way in most bodies that approach structural integration. Interestingly, the Rolfing model of economy of movement is at variance with the commonly accepted kinesiological model. From the Rolfing perspective the standard kinesiological account of normal walking describes the movement patterns of bodies that are poorly organized and functionally compromised. The accepted kinesiological model mistakenly claims that these dysfunctional, inefficient patterns of movement are normal.⁶

Organized bodies will also exhibit balance between the back and front, the top and bottom, the left and right sides, and the inside and outside.

The logo graphically displays many of these concerns. Because of all the displacements, twistings, and confusions in the “before” illustration, you see a poorly integrated body at war with gravity. The “after” illustration is the picture of a body approaching integration in gravity as it approaches organization around the line of gravity. The Line is represented in the logo by a plumb-line.

As the investigations into Dr. Rolf’s original insights have continued and matured, we have discovered that no one single indicator constitutes the hallmark of structural integration and appropriate form for every person. We had assumed for years that the best and only objective indicator of structural integration was the line of gravity, even though it had some obvious shortcomings. Once we realized that one of its shortcomings was that it gratuitously assumed the body was equally dense throughout, we also discovered that indiscriminately attempting to make every body conform to the line of gravity could, in certain types of bodies, cause dysfunction. We then realized that Dr. Rolf’s assumption that there is an ideal form for every body was quite mistaken. This mistaken assumption is not limited to Dr. Rolf; it is shared by many other practitioners and theorists in other somatic disciplines, such as physical therapy and osteopathy.

In recent years, we have come to understand that we need a number of comprehensive, objective descriptions, or taxonomies, of both normal structure and normal function. After all, Rolfing is concerned not just with structure but also with economy of function and movement. Indeed, structural integration and functional economy are tied together in at least one very important way: they always arise together; one will not appear without the other.

Recognizing this need has led to the development of a number of descriptive indicators of and tests for integration that go far beyond Dr. Rolf’s original conception of an ideal body. As I mentioned above, we have managed to describe in considerable phenomenological and objective detail what the overall possible patterns of economical and appropriate movement are for many varieties of

healthy integrated bodies. There is no one form or pattern that can serve as the standard for what constitutes normal for all human beings. Normality is not a matter of measuring up to an ideal form as many theorists assume, but is a matter of uncovering what is natural or inherent in the being of the whole.

This concept of “normal” is quite different in scope and implication than the commonly accepted idea of “normal” as measuring up to a norm, statistical average, or standard that is external to the body. “Normal,” in the sense in which I use the term, refers to what is appropriate and optimal for each individual person. Finding “normal” for each client is not a matter of imposing a structural template and ten formulistic sessions on a client, but is a process of discovery. What constitutes normality for each client unfolds by means of careful and sensitive myofascial manipulation and education which explores and uncovers the possibilities and limitations inherent in each person’s form in relation to how they have adapted to their environment. Living wholes are self-organizing, self-regulating systems characterized by the continual ongoing attempt to balance, organize, harmonize, and enhance their lives between limitation and possibility. Normality is neither an ideal nor a static state, but is an evolving achievement that is won again and again over the course of a life. It is the manifestation of what is inherent and natural to who and what we are at each moment in time, as we allow ourselves to become who we are. Whether our inherent plasticity is severely fixated or highly flexible, we are always striving toward becoming more fully ourselves. Although we have discovered many overlapping strands of similarity in what constitutes normal and abnormal structure and function, we have also learned to recognize that who and what one fully *is* varies from person to person.

Our investigations have taken Rolfing well beyond Dr. Rolf’s template of the Ideal Body and her famous ten-session “recipe.” We have created a gentler approach that responds to the unique needs of each person and does not require a specified number of

sessions. Our research continues. There is some solid physiological research demonstrating that the third-paradigm manipulations of Rolfing create consistent neurological changes which are clearly associated with well-being. No one of our evolving taxonomies by itself is sufficient to stand as the hallmark of integration. But all of them taken together, including some I have not mentioned, are beginning to provide us with a comprehensive science and objective phenomenology of normal structure and normal function.

The Harmony of Being is Palintonic

These ways of talking about your body's structure and patterns of movement are reflective objectifications. They are very important and useful ways of viewing your body, but they do not give you a sense of the experiential reality of Rolfing. Ultimately, unless these objectifications can be grounded in our prereflective experiential understanding of unconflicted space and time, they remain at the level of interesting abstractions based on what can be observed in the body as it relates to gravity.

Dr. Rolf attempted to describe both the objective and experiential reality of Rolfing from many directions. She was quite fond of the German word *Spannung*. She felt this one word profoundly expressed the experiential and objective sides of Rolfing and her functional approach to The Line. *Spannung* is tension, excitement, stretch, span. It can apply to the in-tune stretch of a guitar string or to the span of tensile structures, such as suspension bridges and human bodies. At the same time, it can apply to the qualities that our body-selves exhibit during intense moments of exhilarating acts of attention, aesthetic contemplation, meditation, or even love-making. Unfortunately, no one English word is adequate to hold all of these meanings and there is no easy way to turn *Spannung* into a technical term that flows well in our language.

I began searching for a word that would better serve Dr. Rolf's purposes. I also wanted this word to describe the nature of the

orthogonal relation of horizontals and verticals that manifest in the tissue of structurally integrated bodies. Then I recalled one of my favorite quotes from the great pre-Socratic philosopher, Heraclitus (c. 500 BCE.): “They do not apprehend how in differing with itself it is brought to agree with itself: stretched-back-and-forth harmony like that of the bow and lyre.” The Greek word for “stretched-back-and-forth” is *palintonos*.

The root-syllable *tonos* is the root of the English word “tone.” It applies to musical tone, muscle tone, and emotional tone. It does not mean just any type of span or stretch, but implies, for example, the appropriate stretch of a guitar string when it is in tune. It can also be used to talk about the emotional qualities in a person’s voice, or about affectivity in general. Most health care professionals easily recognize that a healthy, stress-free life demands a body whose muscle, connective, and organ tissues are well toned.

The root-syllable *palin* means “back and forth,” “again,” or “back,” in the sense of “going back to.” A palindrome, for example, is a word or phrase that reads the same backward or forward (for example, “madam,” “noon,” and “Dennis and Edna sinned”). *Palin* should not be confused with *paleo*, which means “old” or “ancient”; the latter, when combined with *onta*, which means “existing things,” becomes “paleontology,” the study of the life of past geological periods based on fossil records.

Heraclitus speaks with ancient and universal wisdom. Unfortunately, his penetrating wisdom was buried under the advent of Plato’s metaphysics of dis-ease. Because the Western framework of thought is so deeply embedded in the Platonic metaphysics, we must learn to hear meditatively, with ancient and uncontaminated ears, *that* of which Heraclitus speaks.

Plato sought freedom in the denial of earth and the body. He argued that the ultimate was to be found in an eternal, unchanging realm not-of-this-earth, often humorously referred to by later philosophers as “Plato’s heaven.” Heraclitus, in contrast, said that the harmony of being is to be found not in the denial of one pole

of an opposition, but in the appropriate span or tension between them. This span or tension requires opposition. Harmony results when the poles which constitute the opposition are held in a unified balance. "Palintonos" means, therefore, "unity of opposition" or "oppositional balance."

The palintonic harmony of which Heraclitus speaks is primordial. It refers not only to being itself in its spacious wholeness, but also to each and every being in its relation to the whole. It is not the effect of two separate objects causing a conflict which are then somehow brought into objective equilibrium. Palintonicity is a harmonious unitary repose of self-supporting, mutually-interfusing diversification and opposition. Harmony in Heraclitus' sense is impossible without opposition. Palintonic harmony is the primordial manner in which being in opposition to itself is "brought to agree with itself." As human beings we cannot find our appropriate place or home apart from where we always and already bodily are. Our freedom is not to be found in a heavenly realm that stands in denial of the earth and the body.

Freedom is our primordial heritage, our native condition. We cannot create it and if we seek it, we lose it. It is not to be found anywhere else than where always and already bodily are. Freedom lives when we return or go back to (*palin*) our original dwelling place, appropriately spanning our lived-space between heaven and earth and spanning our lived-present between past and future. When we realize our freedom, we realize our appropriate form as a spacious body and dwell in palintonic harmony: grounded in the self-secluding, self-supporting limitation of earth and the past as we reach, evolve, and lift toward the ever-expansive possibility of heaven and the future.

Heraclitus does not explicitly mention the body in this fragment, but clearly palintonicity must include our unique somatic nature and its relation to the whole of being. After all, at one very important level, it is our body that spans the lived-space between heaven and earth. Unlike most animals, we do not orient in time

and space with our spines parallel to the earth. Rather we are upended with our feet on the earth and our heads lifted to the heavens.

Heraclitus is much closer in spirit to Taoism and Zen than he is to the modern world's philosophical heritage, rooted as it is in the Platonic denial of the body and the earth. Heraclitus would probably have approved of the following quote from Chuang Tzu's "Great and Small" as an another way to explicate palintonos:

He who wants to have right without wrong,
Order without disorder,
Does not understand the principles
Of heaven and earth.
He does not know how
Things hang together.
Can a man cling only to heaven
And know nothing of earth?
They are correlative: to know one
Is to know the other.
To refuse one
Is to refuse both.⁷

Chuang Tzu concludes by saying that anyone who lives in denial of one pole of the primordial structure of opposition is either a rogue or a madman.

Dr. Rolf understood "the principles of heaven and earth" and found a way to make them come alive in her unprecedented system of manipulation and education. The concepts of The Line and The Core represent her attempt to articulate the objective and experiential meaning of normal structure and normal function.

The concept of palintonos captures many of the essential features of Dr. Rolf's vision. It can be used to describe the objective oppositional balance achieved in tensile structures like tents, suspension bridges, and human bodies. It can describe our subjective experiences of peace with gravity. It can describe how you feel when

your body-self is grounded and uplifted, freely and fluidly spanning the lived-space between earth and sky. Palintonic harmony also describes the lotus land of purity and the body of the Buddha. It describes the harmony of being that your spacious body realizes in prereflective allowing. The concept of “palintonic harmony” also captures an important point about the theory of wholism. As Dr. Rolf’s investigations clearly imply, no wholistic theory or practice is complete if it remains satisfied with balancing only the whole person. The complete goal of balancing the whole person is realized with Dr. Rolf’s recognition that transformation and integration cannot fully manifest unless our bodily being is brought into appropriate relation with our environment. Listen to Dr. Rolf’s own words as she tries to give voice to “the principles of heaven and earth,” or what Heraclitus called palintonic harmony:

Yoga as it is taught today does not go far enough. The body organized through yoga achieves joint mobility but does not consciously recognize and seek out the gravity field as its basic supportive factor. It does not and cannot achieve a true vertical relationship. . . . True verticality, the goal of Structural Integration, is more than a figment of the imagination. Indeed, it is very real; it is a functional phenomenon, a line around which the body’s energy fields balance. Again, these energy forces are not abstract; they manifest in real myofascial material structures. Through its vertical stance, the organism is no longer earth-bound; the vertical expresses an energy relation between earth and sun. . . . As order evolves, a gravity/anti-gravity structural organization defines itself, and this basic polarity, rooted in the earth, expresses in terms of vertical lift.⁸

The gravity/antigravity relation to which Dr. Rolf refers could be described as the palintonic harmony of the spacious body as it creatively appropriates the limitations of space-time, fascia, and gravity. It is a person grounded on the earth, lifted toward the heavens, centered in the core/surface integration, and moving with unencumbered ease on the earth in the fullness of time. As we began to realize our core, our bodies cease being a knot of conflict

imprisoning us in the misery of the human condition and begin being a clearing, a space from which our freedom can be realized.

Being grounded is not possible unless your body is also uplifted and centered in the appropriate relationship between core and surface, and moving with unencumbered ease. For the purposes of analysis, you can distinguish being grounded, being uplifted, being centered, having core and surface integration, and economy of movement. But in fact, each is a way of talking about the same unitary phenomenon; each is a way of describing appropriate form, and you cannot have one without having all the others.

Structurally, being grounded requires that your feet are in the proper relation to the ground plane, your legs are under and properly supporting your upper body, and your feet and knees are tracking straight ahead in walking. If you are not grounded, whether you fully realize it or not, your experience of yourself and your relationship with the world and the earth will be affected.

Sam decided to come to me for Rolfing during his junior year in college. He stood with his knees locked. He referred to his hyper-extended knees as his “banana legs.” He was felt burdened and overwhelmed by his studies. He told me that his father would pay for his education only on the condition he became a doctor. Sam hated pre-med, but he wanted an education.

Somewhere in the middle of his ten sessions, Sam’s knees unlocked and he decided to tell his father that he could “take his money and stick it!” When Sam came back for his next session, his knees were locked again and he was not so sure he wanted to say anything to his father.

During the semester I worked with Sam, he oscillated between standing up to his father and backing down. When he felt ready to stand on his own two feet, his knees unlocked. When he felt he could not go against his father, his knees locked. This issue rarely manifests so clearly and simply in the Rolfing process. But, like many people who lock their knees, Sam had never been given a chance to stand on his own two feet and find his own ground.

Janet had her head in the clouds and walked like a flower child, as if her feet were two inches off the ground. John was depressed and walked with a characteristic slouched, down-at-the-heels, shambling kind of gait. Bill thought of himself as an aggressive, successful, no-nonsense businessman. He held his head high, pulled his shoulders proudly back, and walked with such heavy heels that I was certain he would leave dents in my floor. He considered his body a mere machine to be dominated willfully. He was outraged at his body when it began breaking down "mechanically," causing him severe back pain. Sam, Janet, and Bill were ungrounded and in opposition to the earth and themselves. They did not have their legs and feet securely under their bodies and each experienced their opposition to their environment somewhat differently.

The foot has a number of arches. The medial arch allows for support by distributing weight and the lateral arch provides lift. If the feet are flat or the medial arch is too high, economy of movement, appropriate distribution of weight, and the necessary lift will be lacking. When the feet are ungrounded, the entire body from bottom to top is ungrounded and without proper support. Sometimes when we feel ungrounded we lock your knees as a way to overcome our sense of falling or our sense of having no support. This loss of support in turn unbalances the position of our pelvis, trunk, and head.

If we are ungrounded we tend to feel ourselves in opposition to our body and the earth. The Judeo-Christian tradition seems to recognize ungroundedness when it speaks of "original sin" as "the fall." Or consider the Oedipal tragedy: *oedipus* means "swollen foot." When Oedipus realized his crime, he pierced his own eyes. As a "swollen foot," he lost his grounding. With his loss of grounding he also lost his uprightness, and therefore his ability to *see*.

When we lose our grounding, we lose some aspect of our freedom. We may feel anxious and insecure about our position in the world. At one level of analysis, anxiety is the threat of nonbeing. At another level, it is also the loss of our ground and the threat of

falling. When we are ungrounded we usually attempt to secure our ground in inauthentic, ungrounded ways. At the root of all head-thinking, for example, is the attempt to secure our ground by means of our head, by means of conflicted, reflective thinking. The head-thinking of our culture obviously stands in opposition to the grounded *seeing* of the allowing logos and, by implication, in opposition to our bodies and the earth.

When you are grounded you are at the same time uplifted. Being uplifted does not mean having your head in the clouds and feet off the ground, like Janet. It is not living for the moment at the expense of the past and future. It is not chasing after unreal possibilities with the forced, pseudohappiness of many New Age “flow-and-glow” metaphysicians. Being uplifted is also not being hypererect or military-erect. Viewed from the side, hypererect people actually bow backward and are often living demonstrations of structural and emotional rigidity.

Taking a willful stand in the world like Bill, or fantasizing unreal possibilities with no appreciation of limitation like Janet, are just as ungrounded as John’s slouched and down-at-the heels posture which reveals how limited he perceives life to be. In being released in gravity, your body is grounded and uplifted. Because they are palintonically related, one cannot happen without the other. By appropriating the limitation of earth, a grounded body-self is uplifted in palintonic harmony toward heaven and possibility.

Freedom happens in living fully and appropriately the palintonic tension between limitation and possibility, between earth and heaven. As long as you are alive there can never be impossible limitation or unlimited possibility. Freedom happens when limitation does not excessively limit us and possibility does not unground us in fanciful unrealities. In varying levels of realization, this freedom is displayed in a structurally and functionally integrated body, in a body that is organized and at ease in gravity and form. Grounded, you experience life as uplifting.

The relationship between heaven and earth is not an objectified

relationship that exists in the measurable distance between two objects. It is the primordial, lived-palintonic relationship in which we always and already dwell as body-selves. It is the lotus land of purity and the body of the Buddha. It is the transfiguration of the tension of displeasure into the ecstatic energy of empowerment.

We do not orient in space and time with our spines parallel to the earth like most of the other creatures of the earth. We are upended and striving toward uprightness. Fundamentally, our life does not take place in objectified relationship. Whether we realize it or not, our life takes place in primordial relationship, in the palintonic harmony of being. When we are in somatic conflict, we do not live in the reposeful tension of palintonic harmony. In conflict, we seek our freedom in the minor epiphanies of peak experience and search for our true home in realms other than the one in which we primordially and palintonically are. Human freedom, however, happens when our body-selves live the appropriate span and tension between heaven and earth, when we live in palintonic harmony between possibility and limitation.

Since the tension of palintonic harmony is not an objectified relationship but a primordial one, it is not the effect of two objects causing a conflict. There is no need to remove the opposition in order to reestablish an objective equilibrium. Much in the same way that removing opposition in a great musical composition would destroy its harmony, our life would lose its moorings with the removal of primordial opposition.

When your somatic being begins to be released in gravity, you begin to live grounded and uplifted in the reposeful palintonic tension between legs and head. The area between your solar plexus and floor of the pelvis is your center. Depending on what activity you are engaged in (running, walking, thinking, making love, meditating, etc.), and whether it is conflicted or free, your sense of where your center is will vary. Head-thinkers, for example, are very rarely centered. They mobilize their energies and orient toward the world from the surface of their upper chest, neck, and head.

The objective center of gravity is found in the pelvic area. But our pelvis is much more than the point where the weight of all the parts of the body exactly balance each other. It is at the center of our being. If our pelvis is not structurally balanced, if it is inappropriately tipped forward, backward, or rotated, then our balance, support, grounding, and uplift will be disturbed. If our pelvis is not centered and balanced, we tend to experience ourselves and actions as uncentered. We may experience a lack of strength, direction, and clarity of intent. An unbalanced pelvis may be the expression of a host of physiological and psychological difficulties centering around sexuality, elimination, and digestion. Without a center, we remain spiritually immature, ungrounded and without any sense of what Heidegger calls the “uplifting illumination” (*Aufheiterung*). Without a center, we are never truly at rest or at home in the world or on the earth.

Our center is *not* our core. In a sense, the center is our gateway to our core. In being centered, you are at once given access to the core of your being. Whether you fully realize it or not, finding your core is also the beginning of finding the core of being. The core of being is sometimes called love, and it is the event of appropriate relationship: the radiantly allowing spaciousness of palintonic harmony which sees itself as *this*.

The core can be and has been objectified in many ways for the purposes of teaching and understanding. For Dr. Rolf and her students, the core has been understood both structurally and functionally. The structural aspects of the core are somewhat more difficult to describe than the functional aspects, partly because the spatial aspects of the core are more difficult to represent anatomically. What Rolfers call “core function” has been measured and studied by means of neurophysiological, psychophysiological, and kinesiological models.

Dr. Rolf often described the core in terms of the intrinsic musculature, which she distinguished from the extrinsic musculature. She called the extrinsics the sleeve (or surface). In this model, when

the core appears, it is perceived as a dynamic state of functional balance between the intrinsic and extrinsic musculature and between the agonist/antagonist muscle pairs. The neurological research mentioned earlier indicates that what Rolfers recognize as the appearance of core function is also associated with the appearance of healthy neurological functioning. The research demonstrates that Rolfed people exhibit a positive long-term change in parasympathetic/sympathetic nervous system balance and flexibility usually found only in those who have devoted years to meditation. This same research demonstrates an intimate connection between the fascial and neurological systems which, in turn, tends to support claims that Rolfing profoundly affects the neocortex of the brain and, hence, the whole person.

Even though the spatial and structural dimensions of the core are more difficult to describe anatomically, a number of interesting attempts have been made to do so. One way to understand the core is to see it as the internal space of the body bounded by the bony pelvis, abdominal myofasciae, and rib cage, extending from the floor of the pelvis up through and in front of the spine to the roof of the mouth. Other models add the space between the legs which extends from the pelvic floor down to and emerging just in front of the heels on the bottom of the feet. These models also insist that the core must also extend up past the roof of the mouth to the top of the head.

Structural, anatomical models of the core are important to Rolfing theory because they attempt to describe observable features of the body that guide the work of Rolfing. Manipulating certain key myofascial structures, for example, often visibly open up, lengthen, and actually increase internal spaces in the body. What Rolfers recognize and clients feel as core length and core function happen when these spaces visibly open up, lengthen, and increase in volume before your eyes. For example, Rolfing the myofasciae on the inside of the thighs (e.g., the adductors) and pelvic floor often will lengthen and increase the core space of the whole torso. If the

restrictions between the pelvic floor and the roof of the mouth are few, you also will see the neck actually lengthen a bit and the head come into better alignment from just manipulating the myofasciae of the adductors and pelvic floor.

Clearly, the concept of core in Rolfing refers to many related levels in our human body-self. It can be used objectively to describe structural, functional, neurological, and psychological features of our body-self. It can be used subjectively to talk about what it feels like to experience integration in gravity. It can also be used to describe prereflective, lived-through experiences of integration, including, at the deepest levels, profound spiritual transformation. Our body-person is a unified whole and no matter which level of core we speak about, when our body approaches integration in gravity, we are approaching the realization of our spacious body.

Like most Rolfers, when I work with people I do not objectify the core. In order to keep my clients in touch with themselves during the Rolfing process, I subjectify the core. As I try to evoke the core with my hands, I give my clients images of the core as ways to begin feeling into their internal sense of balance and ease.

You can visualize your core as extending through the center of your body from the crown of your head, down slightly in front of your spine, through the insides of your legs, and emerging just in front of your heels on the soles of your feet.

Before you can find your core when standing, you must have your weight equally distributed along the bottoms of your feet. If you now push down into the earth from in front of your heels, you might experience how the core line lifts skyward as the outside of your body rests down and hangs free, no longer straining to hold you up. When the core lifts and the outer body rests free of holding you up, you are released in gravity. You may feel light and free as if a burden you forgot you were carrying was suddenly lifted from your body.

If I am working with a client who is in a sitting position, I might ask her to visualize her core as beginning just in front of her sitting

bones (the ischial tuberosities), running up in front of her spine, and coming out the crown of her head. Depending on what I am trying to accomplish for her body, I might ask her to lean forward from the hips and at the same time lengthen the space in front of her spine and to continue it up and out the crown of her head as I work on relevant structures with my hands. Sometimes something as simple as “Do you feel how you lead with your chest?” or “Do you feel how you lead with your chin?” is enough to allow her to find some aspect of her core.

Perhaps as she stands up at the end of the session, she spontaneously experiences a new level of integration in her body and lights up with a common characteristic look of amazement. In the first flush of experience, before she feels the urge to talk about it, she is prereflectively living her core. As soon as she comments on her experience and says something like, “Wow! This is incredible! I feel so tall. I feel so fluid and light, as if I am balanced on a column of airy expansive energy inside my body,” she has moved from the prereflective experience of her core to a reflective, subjective report on her experience.

Her subjective report on prereflective experience is her way of talking about how her core feels to her. Her subjective report may or may not be the same as yours or mine. In some ways it might be quite different. But usually there are overlapping strands of similarity between most subjective descriptions. Sometimes a subjective description of the core represents a quite narrow and quirky personality-bound perspective. At other times it can be an amazing revelation of an opening into spaciousness. As our prereflective experience of the core deepens, our lives are enriched. As we are enriched, so too are our subjective descriptions.

There are many other images of and ways to find your core. Zazen, for example, is a very powerful way to the core. If you truly center in your belly, or hara, then you will at once open through your core. In Zen belly-breathing, you are really breathing your core. Another way to sense your core is to lie down with your knees

up and imagine your breath, like a wave of light, moving up and down in front of your spine as your body undulates with the inhalation and exhalation.

You can appropriately objectify and subjectify the core in many of the ways suggested above. But, prereflectively and free of any conflict, prior to any subjectification or objectification, the core is the place from which you orient and the surface is the orientation. Your core is being and your surface is doing. The core is what I have called allowing, and the surface is the will. The core is also your true self. Even though the core is the root of our innermost sense of identity and even though it may be, through confusion and conflict, undifferentiated from our surface or ego-self, it is also a window to the spaciousness of no-self. Ultimately, the core is the radiantly presencing spaciousness of being which sees itself as *this* in palintonic harmony.

When we are in touch with our core, we become who we are, and find our original home before our conflicted selves were born. Our actions (surface) become responsible, empowered, and appropriate as we drop our adherence to uptight and repressive values. With core/surface *differentiation* you may discover your true self. In alchemical language, this *separatio* produces the philosopher's stone. With core/surface *integration* you discover the spaciousness of no-self. In the language of alchemy this was called the *mysterium coniunctionis*. If you truly open and breathe your core, you will begin to understand what one of my Zen teachers meant when he said, "Zen is creating the world with Buddha!" For when you breathe your core, you are being breathed by the whole universe, spaciously and in palintonic harmony.

Without the beginnings of the proper relation between core and surface, freedom can degenerate in many ways. I have already described some of these ways at length when I discussed the experiences of Marcie, Trudy, Willy, and Elaine. In general, to the extent that we are not in touch with our core, we are unclear about who we are and our place in this world. Our actions (surface) can

become forced, unthinking, blind, violent, needy, lacking in conviction, and so on. In short, they become inappropriate to what is unfolding in our lives.

People come to Rolfing for many reasons. Like many others, I looked to Rolfing for relief from debilitating back pain and discovered the spacious body. Some people only want freedom from pain and stress, and most of the time that is what they get. I have worked with many athletes, including NBA superstars, who discovered that Rolfing could help them quickly overcome their pain and injuries as well as give them an extra edge in competition. Dancers, musicians, artists, and students of yoga have all found their art and performance greatly enhanced by Rolfing. Many people, like Trudy, get Rolfed because it deepens and speeds up their therapy. And a few come to Rolfing because they sense in it a transformational possibility.

But whoever comes and for whatever reasons, I Rolf what each person gives me. It is unethical and often psychologically damaging to push people where they are not ready to go. Rolfing has the potential to open and integrate some rare people through every level of their being, including the spiritual. In the end, however, the level of transformation you realize through Rolfing depends on you, on the kinds of preparations and commitments to transformation you make prior to ever getting Rolfed. For many, however, relief from stress and pain as well as some degree of physical and/or emotional balance is enough.

Like the philosophical alchemists, Dr. Rolf realized that a great spiritual truth lay hidden in the human body. In a way, you could say that fascia is the *prima materia* and that Rolfing is the method by which our body self is transformed into the *ultima materia*. Dr. Rolf always tried to keep her explanations of Rolfing within the purview of science. Nevertheless, it is not too far off to suggest that she discovered part of the secret of alchemical transformation. Through her hands and vision she found the “philosopher’s stone” which allowed her to begin the process of transformation for others.

The secret of this transformation is the creative appropriation of fascia and gravity.

There are many levels and dimensions of integration and balance possible for many different kinds of bodies. With a number of my clients who have scoliosis, for example, I have been able to unwind and straighten out their curvatures to the point where it would take a trained eye to see the curvature that remained. In other forms of scoliosis, I found it difficult to alter fully the outward appearance of the curvature. But it was possible to achieve better balance, integration, and ease of movement for these people.

It is too easy to slip into a simplistic, two-dimensional objectification of what the ideal Rolfed body should look like. The Rolfing logo often misleads people in this way. Dr. Rolf also misled people with her infatuation with the notion of an Ideal Body and with the idea that Rolfing imposed a kind of template on each body. With the discovery of the principles of Rolfing and more precise taxonomies of normal structure and normal function, Rolfing has been able to abandon these Platonic ideals. We have come to understand that Rolfing can be only the occasion for the level of transformation that each person is prepared for and ready to undertake. Furthermore, since structural integration and functional economy are really only two ways of talking about a unitary possibility, all Rolfing manipulations and movement education must ultimately be tailored to what is structurally and functionally possible and appropriate for each body-person in his or her relation to gravity.

Fortunately, there are many ways and levels in which to realize integration and balance. In order to underscore this point I want to close this chapter with a story from Chuang Tzu. It is from Book VI of his writings. I have not yet been able to find a translation that is adequate to *that* of which Chuang Tzu speaks. What follows is my own meditative reading, based on a number of translations, which attempts to free his meaning:

Tzu-yü fell ill and Tzu-ssu went to see him. "Great is the Maker of things!" said the sick man. "See how it has allowed me to come forth deformed!" He was a crooked hunchback. His internal organs were squeezed into the upper part of his body. His cheeks were level with his navel. His shoulders were higher than his head. On the top of his head was a lump pointing to the sky. His ingoing and outgoing breath (the yin and yang) was in gasping disorder, but his heart was spacious and at ease as though nothing had happened. He limped quickly to the well, looked at his reflection and said, "Alas, the Maker of things has allowed me to come forth deformed like this!"

"Do you dislike your condition?" asked Tzu-ssu.

"No," said Tzu-yü. "Why should I dislike it? Suppose my left arm were transformed into a rooster. With it I would herald the dawn. Suppose my right arm were transformed into a crossbow. With it I would look for a dove to shoot and roast. Suppose my buttocks were transformed into wheels and my spirit into a horse; I would mount them. What need would I have for a chariot? Whether coming or going our being is of time. When our life brings us to times of crisis, we must simply allow what is happening to occur. Those who are at rest in what time requires and are at ease with form cannot be carried away by sorrow or joy. This is what the ancients called being released in limitation. Those who cannot release themselves are this way because they are held in bondage by their conflicted orientations. That limitation cannot be escaped has been a fact from time immemorial. Why then should I dislike my condition?"⁹

Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 49–63.
2. Ida P. Rolf, *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 201.
3. Rolf, *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures*, p. 249.
4. For a preliminary (and problematic) attempt to state these para-

digms of practice, see the article I co-authored with Benjamin, Dubitsky, Castellino, and Schenkman: "Three Paradigms—Five Approaches," in *Massage Therapy Journal* (Summer, 1991), pp. 21–23.

5. J. L. Oschman, "Structure and Properties of Ground Substances," in *American Zoologist* (1984), pp. 199–215.

6. A number of theories have been advanced to explain how tactile pressure can alter the state and properties of fascia so quickly and remarkably. Dr. Rolf's explanation can be found on page 41 of her book *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures*. For collaboration and further explanation of Dr. Rolf's view, see also J. L. Oschman's "The Connective Tissue and Myofascial Systems," paper published by the Aspen Research Institute, Boulder, Colorado, 1981, available through the Rolf Institute. For further collaboration and the beginnings of a neurological explanation of how Rolfing is able to change fascia, see John Cottingham's *Healing Through Touch: A History and Review of the Physiological Evidence* (Boulder, Colorado: Rolf Institute, 1985), Chapters 15 and 16.

6. For a elaboration of these points and a more complete description of unencumbered walking, see Gael Ohlgren and David Clark, "Natural Walking," in *Rolf Lines* (Vol. XXIII, No. 1, March 1995), pp. 21–29.

7. Thomas Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (New York: New Directions, 1965), pp. 88–87.

8. Ida P. Rolf, *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 289.

9. Several texts of the works of Chuang Tzu were consulted for this rendering: *A Source Book of Chinese Philosophy*, *Chuang Tzu: Inner Chapters*, *The Texts of Taoism*, and Thomas Merton's *The Way of Chuang Tzu*. See the Bibliography for complete information on these sources.

CHAPTER SIX

Time Dancing

SPACE IS WITHOUT EDGES. And there is no time before time.

The preparation for our Zen retreat took place during an expansive, airy week under a cloudless, cerulean October sky. The day before the retreat began, it rained. When the rain ended, the world was cold and damp. I awoke early the next day knowing that it would be a morning without the sun. I sipped my tea in preparation for meditation. It was so strong that it made me shudder in the biting damp wind that pressed its way through the darkness. The trees were wet silhouettes against a darkened sky. Black puddles of water mirrored a shrinking world as everything turned to liquid and dissolved into an endless mist.

Meditating in the dampness, I let go and fell deeper, stiller, into this shrinking. My body ached and lost space as the misery of what I had been overwhelmed the fantasy of what I hoped to be. Like those black puddles, everything and everyone was a mirror for this contraction. Shrinking, the earth was oozing with water. The past, like a wet blanket, hung heavy in my body.

Zero is infinity, someone said. But being limited by limitation, pain and the past erase transcendence and numb all possibility. Breathing my becoming with legs crossed and spine erect, how do I escape this dying? I forgot myself again and fell in further, deeper yet. Not praying for the sun or even a single dry beam of light,

there was just this letting go into water flowing everywhere, streaming and cutting furrows through everything solid and stable. Embracing this contraction and allowing it fully is just death embracing itself. I tried to remember myself and couldn't. In lucid thoughtlessness, I forgot how to flee.

Further, until it cannot go any further, dying imperceptibly turns in on itself, pauses, and even before it can be appreciated, becomes somehow fuller, lighter, and more expansive. Breathing in the stillness, a warm breeze blows through my body and goes out again. Going in is going out: it's only a matter of emphasis. Inside and outside are just a fiction to comfort the self.

Unannounced, rays of sunlight pierced the thick clouds. A dry, hot wind blew through the dampness, clearing space, transforming mud into dust and tears into unencumbered airy openness. Buried feelings, half-formed thoughts, and images drifted and floated through an empty expanse like wispy clouds in a measureless sky. In anticipation, the future, a door without hinges, asks to be opened again and again. Possibilities are possible in a clarity that knows no boundaries and yet is true to the earth.

For two days the sun baked the earth. Dry leaves swirled and danced in the warm breezes and the world overflowed with the incense of October.

On a short rest period after seven days of zazen, I saw a gigantic bumblebee slowly weaving and listing this way and that like some low-flying bulldozer, buzzing with unerring blind purpose into the gaping openness of an equally gigantic flower, upturned and shining in the mid-morning sun. Thump! Time, space, and form reverberate, enjoin, participate and become an outrageous unity of autumnal excess. Stepping out and back from what was coming to presence, almost like tripping over myself inside myself, I reflected on what I had participated in and thought, "Ha! How wonderful! I wish I had been that bumblebee." And just as quickly as I had that thought I lost myself again and realized I am there, now, this presence: I am this excess, this uroborus of time, space, and form.

What is in time lapses, but time does not.

Two months later, the bumblebee forgotten, I am driving the freeways, once more participating in the mindless Christmas drive-and-spend-money circus. The pale December sun pours through cracks in the thick grey skies and singses the cold pavement. Just as I notice the steam arising from the road, the grip I have on myself in all of this loosens. Driving into the continual arising and falling away, participating with the ever-present coming and going of presence, the allowing emptiness at the bottomless ground of my self spaciously becomes time.

I am in time and lapsing in time like other beings in time. At the same time, I *am* time and time does not lapse.

Whether driving these steaming cold highways, reading a book, or drifting off to sleep, on the basis of what I have been, there is always just now this continual ongoing openness into what is next. Where I have been and where I am going: they are just coming and going now.

Being-in-time and being-time are at the same time my time and the time of all beings. When we live time spaciously, coming to presence in the present is sometimes so small that it is just enough space to hold a glance. And in the next moment before anyone recognizes the transformation, I have paid for the tickets to a movie. Sometimes it is so immense that what we call our past and our future is embraced by it, enlarged by it, and made so fully present that presence sings with a synchronicity of events and details, so rich, so full, so ripe, so fleeting, so still that it would bring tears to the eyes of Mozart.

We are not only in time, we are of time.

Whether the time we are is lived in conflict or spaciously, we are always just being here in this very present, lapsing into our future on the basis of the rhythms of our past. What is in time passes and lapses. Because time is not any kind of thing that exists in time, it does not pass and lapse. When we live our time in conflict and fixation, we only experience ourselves as passing through

time. Time flies or time drags along. We can have too much time, not enough time, or, sometimes, just enough time. At such times we experience our time only as the passage of time.

But when we live our time spaciouly awake, fully present in the present, we also are embracing and being embraced by past and future. We are both in time and of it. Because we are in time we experience ourselves as passing through time, changing and aging in time. Because we are of time, and time itself is not in time, we also can come to know our bottomless nature as the ageless non-passing of time.

Spaciouly awake in the fullness of time, we live our time passing through the non-passing of time. The great Japanese Zen teacher Dogen calls being-in and being-of time the "passageless-passage." *That* which is always and already present in the present is the ageless non-passing of time, aging as this very person we now are as we pass through time. *That* which sees and hears the world at birth is the same as *that* which sees and hears the world at two years old, at ten, at twenty-five, at fifty, and at the moment of death. At two years old, *it* is ageless and two years old. At eighty years old, *it* is the same: ageless and eighty years old. You are this passageless-passage, this ageless-aging.

But, far more often than not, we are not fully present in the present. The conflicts and fixations in our ways of orienting spatially are also manifest in our temporal orientations. For not only are we a psychospatial orientation, we are also a psychotemporal orientation. Any conflicted orientation at any level is already both a spatial and temporal conflict that undermines our relationship to each other and to all of *this*. The unique ways in which we are not fully present in our present are also manifested in the unique ways in which we do not appropriately live our past and our future. And just to the extent that we cannot be fully present in our present is the extent to which we are uniquely incapable of being present with and living in appropriate relationship with others. Blocked or suppressed fear, anger, and sadness are simply ways of not being fully

present in the present and hence ways of not relating and orienting appropriately in space and time.

We cannot be fully present if we are denying or dominated by our past, or projecting or awaiting an unreal future. Being fully present means that we are living and orienting as unconflicted body-space-time. And being fully present happens in no other time than the one in which we always and already are—the present. The present is not a dimensionless moment isolated and divorced from your past and future. Your present is just the way it is because of your past and the ways you have projected and anticipated your future. Your present is always thick with the choices, decisions, and ways of being that are your past as you orient and style your life into your future. Your present is the way it is now because of your past *and* your future.

Jason

Rolfing Jason had been difficult. Until his eighth session, Jason's Rolfing experience had become just like his everyday life: he could not become fully present in either. When I worked with him, his energy scattered all over the room. If he could have, he would have left his body completely. But after his eighth session, his core opened and he came to presence in the present. Since he was largely unaware of himself and his orientations, he did not understand what was going on. As Jason began to let himself rest at ease in his form and manifest in his present, he found himself uncomfortably close to his anxiety. He shuddered and shook his head. He tensed his forehead with the pained, angry indifference of a Hollywood hero, stared off into space, and said, "You know, man, I should get on my motorcycle and travel through the West for a while."

I quickly pointed out to him how he had just completely abandoned his newly-opened space and asked him to feel the difference. I became a kind of mirror for him and was able to show and speak to how he was no longer living fully his space or body, how

he was living his body from the chest up. As I talked to him, he found his core and became present in the present again. He went back and forth a number of times from being present to not being present until he clarified in his own experience how he accomplished not being present by living in his head.

I then asked Jason to repeat out loud what he had said about traveling West on his motorcycle, first saying it, "I *should* . . ." and then, "I *could* . . ." When he said "should" he lost presence and looked like some solitary gunfighter trying to deny all need and relationship with others, but when he said "could" he was able to stay present. I asked him to describe the difference between "could" and "should." He said, "When I say 'should' I am not even here and I don't give myself any choice. When I say 'could,' not only am I here, now, I also have a choice as to whether to go on the trip or not!"

I said, "Why don't you go West on your motorcycle?"

Very slowly and quietly he said, "Because I'd probably get killed doing it."

Jason, like too many people, is more willing to project an unreal possibility and future not grounded in the reality of his own life, than to become fully present in the present and resolve the conflicted orientations demanded by such a commitment. Provided it is chosen in an unconscious way, sometimes even death seems preferable to being fully here in the present.

A conflict in space is also a conflict in time. Defined as a psychospacial, psychotemporal orientation, fear is not wanting to be present in the present. The collapse in Marcie's body was somewhat different from Jason's collapse. Both had tight cores, but where Marcie's surface was soft, Jason's was hard. When Jason got too close to his neediness and anxiety, he started to live toward a future in which he played out his fantasy of being a lone, solitary drifter in need of no one and no thing. He had a job he could leave any time the urge to move on grabbed him. His relationships with women were terrible. "I like to love 'em and leave 'em," he said.

Marcie

Since Marcie's orientation was one of not being present, she was never able to be in the present. She was not able to create a compensation like Jason's and become a solitary drifter. For days she would brood on her past, complaining about how awful her life had been and why she could not change it. Because she never received the love and nourishment she needed as a child, she believed the world owed her a living. So she lived her life always waiting for a false future that never came, a future in which some "knight on a white horse" would magically transform her life. She went from one relationship to another. Waiting for love, she was again and again used by men. Not wanting to be present, her present was nowhere; her past, like an inherited disease, inexorably determined her actions; and her long-awaited future was suspended before her, an empty dream demanding fulfillment.

Trudy

Bogging down in the density of her desperate need to be present, Trudy continually lost her presence in the denial of her sadness and the avoidance of her anxiety. Although she desperately and willfully tried to be present in the present, she never was. Trudy always moved slower than the flow of events, yet the slower she moved, the more time crowded in on her. The more she felt pressured by time, the slower she moved and the denser she became while simultaneously trying all the harder to become present in the present.

Desperately needing a loving relationship, Trudy had never found it. Willfully forcing her presence always guaranteed that she could never be present in the present. The density of her not being present prevented her from opening her body-space for a lover. Forcing herself to be there in a way that prevented her from being there for another meant that she could never touch and be touched, love and be loved.

The unwilling-will can never fully love and be loved by another because it has forgotten how to allow love and how to allow presence to be present. When she fell into depression, Trudy was walled off from her future, crushed under the weight of her past, and stagnated in her present.

Charles

Defined psychospatially, anger is an orientation that attempts to protect presence either against a real or imagined threat or against the rejection of presence. When I saw Charles for his first Rolfing session I knew that he was blocking his anger. Charles, however, had no idea that he was angry. Before he was ready to hear it, I made the mistake of telling him that he had a lot of anger. Predictably, he denied it and said, "But I don't *feel* angry."

Charles was rigid. He stood hypererect and military-straight. His face had that pinched, sullen, self-absorbed, haughty look you see on the models in men's fashion magazines. He had a tight, ungrounded rational mind, lived in his head, and seemed to have boundless energy. At first I found myself talking too fast and loud just to keep up with him. He told me that he had "wonderful parents and a perfect childhood." But over the time that we worked together, he confessed that his father was a hard-driving man who was highly critical of everyone and everything, including Charles. Charles never got any pats on the back from his father for a job well done. As an adult Charles worked harder than most. He was a kind of self-styled expert in what he called "peak performance" in business and athletics. He liked to talk about how good he was at everything he did. He said he believed in the pursuit of excellence, but in reality he was only interested in the pursuit of arrogance. And it soon became clear that under his feelings of superiority and grandiosity, he felt very inadequate because he felt he could never measure up to what was expected of him.

Charles was his mother's favorite son. All through his childhood,

she talked to him about her problems and in effect tried to turn him into the caring, sensitive male that she wanted her husband to be. Driven by his father and made to feel responsible for his mother's well-being, Charles was not able to grow up as himself. He thought of himself as a special human being, more capable and smarter than most. But under his elitism and grandiosity, Charles was angry about his father's apparent critical rejection of his true self and his mother's inability, because of her own deep-seated insecurity and neediness, to support and nourish him in becoming himself. Charles lived an illusory vision of who he was. Like a water bug, never able to reach his depth, he was the master of the surface of life.

In the mundane world, his rigidity and willful will served him well in business and in his daily activities. He lived in the denial of his limitations, always trying to expand faster and further into what he called his "unlimited potential for being." Denying the limitations of his past, never resting or letting go in the present, he was always rushing along heedlessly and boundlessly to the illusory unlimited horizon of his future. Whenever he fell sick or exhausted, he took it as a sign of being a failure. So he denied his exhaustion and kept on going. Since he could not just simply allow himself to be, since he was rigidly and willfully living an illusory version of himself for others, he was usually not present in the present.

Women were attracted to Charles, but his relationships were always short-lived. In love, a man and a woman open their body-space for each other. In allowing presence in the present, they yield and give forth of themselves for each other in the reciprocity of loving and being loved. The rejection of Charles' presence by his parents was experienced as a devastating attack on his presence. Charles' continued angry and willful attempt to protect his presence over time blocked his ability to allow presence in the present and hence rendered him less and less capable of loving and being loved. Like every aspect of his life, his relationships with women were always a performance, even in bed.

Charles' surface and core were tight and rigid. When his surface began to soften a bit through Rolfing, Charles got in touch with his anger, exhaustion, and depression. He was deeply defended against the anxiety underlying his depression. As his addiction to superficial experiences of "peak performance" and willful will began to loosen, he got in touch with his exhaustion and depression. Predictably, he became frightened by what was happening. I tried to work with him and encouraged him to see a therapist. He was convinced, however, that therapists were for "crazy people" and that he and his family "were extremely stable and psychologically healthy people."

Rather than come fully present in his present, Charles quit his Rolfing and tried to reconstitute his willful surface illusions. Since the ungrounded, technologically-oriented world we live in perfectly reflects Charles' temporal and spatial conflicts, he was able to reconstitute his conflicted orientation fairly easily. Like Charles, the modern world is in denial of its past, never resting in the present, and rushing headlong and heedlessly into an illusory future where an objectified world and nature are willfully manipulated to create an unlimited bounty for the driven and unhinged.

Janet

In many ways Janet was a female version of Charles. But she rejected Charles' world in favor of a thoughtless, groundless New Age version of philosophy. She loved to speak the language of "flow-and-glow" metaphysics and knew all the buzzwords of wholism and transformational philosophy. With her feet slightly off the ground and her head in the clouds, she signed up for one workshop after another in visualizations, crystal healing, meditation, past-life regression, transformational technology, finding your soul-mate, and the like. Janet was a workshop junkie; workshops for Janet were like a fix for a drug addict. Addicted to her superficial "peak experiences" and "workshop highs," she lived only to suspend the limitations of human life.

Janet said she lived “in the now,” but she was never on time and was always missing appointments. She said she was working on having a real, lasting relationship with a man and was visualizing and meditating on finding her soul mate. She had been divorced three times and went through men the way Charles and Jason went through women. She lived for an illusory sense of the now which rendered her incapable of allowing her presence in the present. Living in the now for Janet meant objectifying the present as an isolated moment in which she could get high, as she did in her workshops. Her “peak experiences” and “workshop highs” occurred in an artificial now that had little relation either to her everyday life or to her past and future.

She spoke of the importance of being committed, but could not be counted on. She espoused the philosophy of love, but was too self-absorbed to experience it. She spoke often and at length of the need for authentic conversation, but mostly engaged in one-sided rantings about what an advanced soul she was, stated in the platitudes of her workshop leaders. She loved to talk about being centered, grounded, in touch, and open for possibility. But it was painfully obvious she only wanted to escape the limitations of human life.

Time was essentially empty of meaning for Janet. Like a drug addict, her “now” was an artificially induced moment in time when she could attain a high, an illusory sense of filling time with meaning and satisfaction without being responsible for her past and future. Living in the now and being open for possibility meant living to suspend the limitations of past and future, of time and space: a desire which if attained would become its own negation.

Janet wanted to try Rolfing, but soon abandoned it in favor of the newest metaphysical fad that promised limitless transformation the easy way.

Only in a world of dreamers is reality even an ideal.

Lived-Time

At every level of our existence, time, like the boundaries of form, provides a limitation in terms of which human experience becomes in the first place even possible. Remove, if you could, your spatial and temporal orientations, and you would find nothing left over that you could call your self.

Because time is at the very heart of what we find ourselves to be, it has always been at the center of all our conflicts as human beings. But today, perhaps more than ever before, we recognize, if only in a vague and troubled way, that we are not at ease with time. As we rush along heedlessly ahead of where we always and already are, we sometimes catch a glimpse of our temporal dis-ease. Without the full force of understanding, most of us realize that somehow things are going too fast. Since our world is not at ease with time, we find it more and more difficult, if not impossible, to be still and at rest in the limitations of human form. Everywhere we hear people talking about stress, and nearly every day someone comes up with a new strategy for reducing stress. Stress is always manifesting in our bodies as imbalance, as conflicted space. But what is stress fundamentally, if it is not also a conflict in time?

And what is time? If I ask you, "What time is it?" you can answer with no difficulty. You know what it is to have good times, bad times, not enough time, time on your hands, the time of your life, quality time, bad timing, and so forth. You can probably identify in some ways with the temporal conflicts of Jason, Marcie, Trudy, Charles, and Janet. Their conflicts in time are not fundamentally different from yours and mine. But to be asked, "What is time?" is to be asked one of those philosophical questions that brings your thinking to a puzzled and abrupt halt. Time is so near to us that it runs our lives and yet the moment we try to define it, it slips away.

Just now as you were reading and engaging in this consideration of time, you were prereflectively living your time. When you

silently spoke the question, "What is time?" you probably stepped out of the flow of lived-experience and lived-time and began to reflectively think about time. If you are like most people you probably began to think about objectified time. Objectified time is the time in terms of which most of us run our lives. It is the time we measure off by means of clocks and calendars. Before the invention of mechanical clocks, our ancestors used the movement of the sun as a way to keep track of time. Objectified time is the way we have agreed to keep track of and measure time according to a constant standard of motion.

When you think about time you more than likely think about clock-time. But you also have all sorts of images and feelings about your time. Some times are remembered or experienced with great relish and others are dreaded or downright boring. This multitude of feelings and images about the times of your life, past, present, and future, is subjectified time. When your orientation moves to the reflective, the subjective and objective world arise together and interface at this level. And of course clock-time and your feelings and images about time also arise together in the reflective mode.

In reflection, time, like every aspect of our experience, is split asunder into the subjective and objective. But the prior condition from which the subjective and objective world arise and on which it depends is *that* which is revealed in prereflective allowing. Time as it is lived in prereflection can be called lived-time. If our concept of time is limited to subjective and objective time, we will tend to confuse lived-time with subjective time. But time as lived is prior to any reflective thoughts and feelings we may have about time. Lived-time is the prior condition for and is hence presupposed in any discussion of subjective and objective time. When you objectify experience in reflection, you see the things of the world, yourself, and others as existing *in* time. Looking at the world and ourselves through the eyes of the conflicted orientations of the unwilling-will, whether in reflection or prereflection, we experience only the passing of time. But fundamentally, as prereflective

allowing reveals, we are not only in time, we are also of time.

Lived-time is not abstract, as is objective clock-time. Objective time is not time you can live. Clock-time is conceived of and measured off as an infinite series of instantaneous moment-points that extend infinitely into both the future and the past. Since the series of moment-points that constitute the near and distant past no longer exist, the objective past does not exist. Since the series of moment-points that constitute the near and distant future have not yet come into being, the objective future does not exist. Since this very moment now has already become a past moment before you were even able to read the next word of this sentence, the objective present does not even exist. The best you can say is that the objective present is an instantaneous moment-point. Objective time thus reduces to an infinite series of nonexistent instantaneous moment-points. This view of time is as abstract as you can get. It is very much like the mathematical definition of a line as a series of dimensionless points which take up no space. These abstractions are useful for certain purposes, but they completely miss the experience of lived-time and lived-space.

You may have warm feelings and remembrances of times past. You may hate to think about your past. Maybe the last three days of your life have been boring and uneventful. Maybe you would like to be reading about time right now, but you are being distracted and disturbed by someone or something and you are thinking, "This is not a good time to do this!" Maybe you are hoping tomorrow will be a better day. Maybe you are visualizing a wonderful weekend with your lover. Maybe this is the best time of your life ever—or the worst. Sometimes time seems to go too quickly and at other times too slowly. Sometimes there is too much time and at other times not enough. These are all examples of subjective time. Subjective time consists of all our personal judgments, feelings, and images about time as we live it.

Lived-time is not a series of instantaneous moment-points. Lived-time is not a feeling or an image. Lived-time is a confluence

of lived-past, lived-present, and lived-future. For the purposes of analysis, we can divide lived-time into the lived-past, the lived-present, and the lived-future. But time as it is lived is not divisible. It is a confluence of past, present, and future. The lived-past provides a foundation from which we can orient toward our lived-future from out of our lived-present. It does not matter whether our orientations are conflicted or unconflicted, lived-time is already confluent.

Your lived-present is an opening up, full of possibility tempered by limitation. It is thick with the decisions of and ways in which you have lived your past and the anticipations of and ways in which you are living toward your future. Your lived-present exhibits a dimensionality and stretch that is not spatial in nature. Your time is not composed of a limitless number of dimensionless nows. Rather, by means of your lived-present, you live your past and future. Your lived-present opens out toward your lived-future on the basis of how your lived-past opens into your lived-present. A past decision is always made in anticipation of a future possibility. You are living your present in the way you are now because of how you have been and what you have tried to be. Without a lived-present you have no opening in time from which to orient in time. You are always right here in this very present projecting your future out of your past.

The lived-past is not simply a collection of memories, feelings, and images, or a series of moment-points that no longer exist. It is a kind of absence, a no-longer-present that exists in your present, and which provides a limitation and ground out of which it is possible for you to live toward a future. Without a past you can have no future.

Your future is not simply a set of hopes, feelings, and images, or a series of moment-points that do not yet exist. Your lived-future is a not-yet-present that is present now as possibility in your lived-present. Because your life is not over, this not-yet-present which is your lived-future provides you with a field of possibility in terms

of which you can orient and direct your life as you have always done and are now presently doing.

In their own ways, Jason, Marcie, Trudy, Charles, and Janet all lived in spatial and temporal conflict. Each in their own way lived their life from within the confines of their unwilling-wills. Each in their own way was unwilling to be present in their present. No matter what form it takes, being unwilling to allow presence in the present is a loss of freedom and is a way of living in conflict with our past, present, and future all at once. If we are unwilling to allow presence in the present, we are unwilling to be here now at this very moment, and hence unwilling to stand in appropriate relationship to others, to our world, and the earth; ultimately, we are unwilling to allow appropriate relationship with *this*.

Brooding on the past, denying the past, being driven by the past, being crushed by the weight of the past, trying to escape the limitations of the past, and so on, are all ways of not allowing presence in the present.

Heedlessly rushing toward future goals and hoped-for satisfactions, experiencing our future as blocked, awaiting someone or some event to magically transform our life, spuriously denying the future in favor of living in the now of addiction, excessively planning or avoiding planning our future, experiencing our future as an escape from having to be in our present situation, experiencing our future as empty, and so on, are all ways of not allowing presence in the present.

Not wanting to be in the present, never letting go of our projects and resting in the present, stagnating in the present, getting high as a way to endow the present with meaning, excessive head-thinking, exploiting and manipulating others, willfully forcing ourselves to be present, passively withdrawing from being present, dominating others with our presence, praying to go to heaven after death as a way of being set free from the limitations of our life, and so on, are all ways of not allowing presence in the present.

Not allowing presence in the present is the basic strategy of the

unwilling-will. It is always manifested in various conflicted psychospatial and psychotemporal orientations. Fundamentally this basic strategy of the unwilling-will keeps us continually separated from ourselves, others, and all of *this*. We remain fixed in inappropriate relationships, demanding love and not finding it. We lose our presence in the present and become enslaved by and lost in time.

We are both in time and of time. Prereflectively, time can be lived either in conflict or freely. In prereflective allowing the difference between conflicted lived-time and unconflicted lived-time shows itself. When prereflection spaciously opens through allowing, we find ourselves free from the conflicts of the unwilling-will. Freed from the fixations of the unwilling-will, we allow presence in the present. In allowing presence in the present, we bodily and spaciously live time as the passageless-passage. Since we are in time and of time, we spaciously and bodily pass through the non-passing of time. Living the unconflicted spacious body *is* living freely and at ease in unencumbered time. Allowing presence in the present, our spacious body lives at ease in the fullness of time fully present in a present thick with the rhythms of our the past lapsing toward our future.

Since time itself is not in time, time does not pass. Time “rooms out” a nonspatial field in which it becomes possible for you and other beings to be and change. Time is a nonspatial holding-open and rooming-out of field in which change, lapsing, passing, and flowing is made possible. What is in time passes, changes, and flows through time, but time itself does not pass, change, or flow through time. Because we sense the passage of things, the movement of the sun and stars, and the movement of the second hand ticking continuously around the clock, we mistakenly think that time “passes.” Time does not pass; only what is *in* time passes. If time itself passes, then it would seem to make sense to ask, “How much time does it take for time to pass?” But this question does not make sense. If it made sense to ask this question you would

also want to know, "How much time does it take the time it takes time to pass, to pass?" and so on to infinity.

We like to think that time is like a river, always changing and flowing. But rivers, like clocks, are things that are in time. Rivers and clocks change, pass, come into and go out of existence. Time cannot be objectified as a thing. Things exist in time, but time is not a thing that exists in time. When we think that time is like a river that flows, we are confusing what flows in time with that which makes flowing even possible in the first place. What lapses is in time. But time itself does not lapse. A clock is a thing in time designed to lapse in a constant unvarying way. A clock is a tool of convenience that stands for objective time. But a clock does not measure off the flow of time. Time is embracing the holding-open and rooming-out of a field, within which the constant unvarying lapsing of clocks is made possible. Time does not lapse.

Since we are fundamentally in time and of time, we are at this very moment lapsing and not lapsing, passing and not passing, aging and not aging.

Transformation-Time

If you chart the waters of human experience, both high and low, you will eventually come to a place that is no place at all but simply and completely just allowing. Allowing allows presence and is sometimes called love.

Allowing presence is both primordial space and primordial time. And so we find ourselves as form, limitation, movement, and change. Primordial space is a spacious opening up and rooming out of a clearing in which form becomes possible. Primordial time is a non-spatial opening up and rooming out of a field in which changing and lapsing, forming and being formed, become possible.

Your bodily lived-space is your lived-form. Since you are also in and of time you are also bodily orienting as lived-time. You are the way spacious time comes to presence as the person you are.

Free of conflict and fixation, you are the spacious body: resting cohesively whole and full of spacious presence in the limitations of form, graciously at ease as the passageless-passage. With your core as the site at which *this* is revealed, the allowing presence of the spacious body knows itself, from no point of view, as allowing presence — as no other than *that* which always and already is, agelessly aging.

No method or strategy at the level of the will can bring us present in the present. Being present in the present is simply and always a matter of allowing. Allowing is primordial relationship, never a method or technique. It is simply and always what is completely and creatively present in the beginningless and endless arising and passing away. The unwilling-will is never completely at ease in the limitations of human life because it is never completely at ease in time or space and never creatively present in the present. To live at ease in the fullness of time and the limitations of form is to creatively appropriate the limitations of time and space. When we are not living fully present in the present, when we are not allowing presence, then in some specific way we are in conflict with our past, present, and future.

Contrary to the way Charles and our world lives time, for example, our future is not an arena of unlimited potential. The future we live toward as individuals and as a society is always limited and shaped by the past. To take a simple example, if you lose a leg in an accident, it will limit and shape how you live and project the rest of your life. As we continue to destroy the environment, if we survive, our actions will dramatically alter future possibility. Rushing headlong and heedlessly into the haphazard gratification of desire on the assumption that the future is unlimited is clearly the result of miasmatic thinking and living. Becoming present in the present demands that our future is lived appropriately.

The past abounds with wrongdoings of every imaginable variety, our own and those of others. If we do not rectify our past and come to terms with what was done to us and what we have done

to others, we will never become fully present in the present. No matter how horrible our past might have been, we are the only ones who can come to terms with it and transform it. In the end, we are the only ones who can live appropriately the time and space of our lives.

The only place from which we can come to terms with our past, present, and future is where we already always are, right here in this very present. Freedom is the creative appropriation of limitation. To live at ease in the fullness of time requires the creative appropriation of the limitations of time.

Appropriating time means owning the time that you are always living as your very own time. It means fundamentally allowing time. Allowing time is allowing what is happening to occur fully and completely without the recoil and willful manipulations of the unwilling-will. In whatever form the recoil takes, the unwilling-will continually refuses to be present in the present and hence stands in conflict with its past and future. Willing to be present in the present, allowing appropriates the limitations of time.

Allowing is never the passivity or activity of the unwilling-will. It is neither driven by objective clock-time nor confused by the endless drama of subjective time. Allowing presence in the present, the future is lived appropriately and fully from what the past has made possible. Allowing presence in the present is empowerment, response-ability, joy, and freedom. Creatively and eternally present, always in flux and eternally still, it is the loving embrace of *this* in human form.

Throughout this book I have discussed the nature of transformation from many different angles and at different levels. I think it is clear that transformation, freedom, creativity, and spirituality are all the same. The word "transformation" is often used interchangeably with "change." But transformation is more than mere change.

The philosophical alchemists knew full well that they were not involved in merely changing one thing into another. They saw their

great opus as an investigation into the spacious heart of creation and transformation. Alchemical transformation is not like chemical change. Alchemists do not add or subtract substances and chemicals to and from each other in order to produce another kind of substance. Their opus is not anything like the cookbook science most of us learn in school. The art of philosophical alchemy is not a product of the will, nor is it a technology of change. It is the art of transformation.

Philosophical alchemy is the art of transforming our conflicted orientations into unconflicted orientations. It is the art of taking what stands in misery, conflict, fixation, and confusion (the *prima materia*) and allowing it to come to presence in palintonic harmony and relationship fully, completely, and freely as itself (the *ultima materia*). In this sense, Zen, Rolfing, and phenomenology are forms of philosophical alchemy.

Transformation and change are not, therefore, the same. In order to produce a change, a step-by-step recipe or formula is required. A recipe put into play by the calculating human self and will is designed to produce a change or product without fundamentally transforming the one following the recipe. Transformation, however, demands the death of this calculating human self and will and the rebirth of a new self and will. This death and resurrection takes place in allowing. Since there are no techniques for allowing, the concept of a “technology of transformation” is an oxymoron.

The word “transformation” is made up of two parts: “trans,” which means literally “across,” and “form.” So transformation does not imply the idea of *changing* form, but rather a taking-up of a special kind of relationship *with* form. Limitation is the condition of form and form is the way, style, or manner in which a person is or becomes who he truly and freely is. Consider the phrase “transatlantic flight.” Since it is next to impossible to change the positions of the continents (i.e., to alter these forms and their limitations), we instead took up a new relationship to the continents by flying across the ocean between them.

Dr. Rolf, for example, realized that although we cannot change the limitation called gravity, we can stand in a different relationship to it. Rolfing represents, therefore, a way to transform our lives by uncovering what we always and already bodily are. At its best, Rolfing accomplishes its work not by forcing our bodies to conform to some Platonic notion of an Ideal Body, but by transforming our body's relationship to gravity.

The special relationship to form that the root-syllable "trans" implies is *allowing*. Thus, with respect to human beings, transformation means "allowing-formation" or, what is the same thing, "allowing-presence." To express it completely, "transformation" means "allowing the way, style, or manner in which a person becomes or *is* who she or he completely, freely, and truly is." Transformation is not the attempt to change yourself so that you measure up to some moral, bodily, or spiritual ideal; it is the art of allowing who you are to manifest completely and freely without conflict and fixation. When freed from conflict and fixation, the spacious body is *who* and *what* you are. Our spacious body is this spacious presence standing here, upright in itself, awake and at ease in the limitations of form and the fullness of time.

Too often we look everywhere else for freedom but where we already always bodily are. We admire the cardboard heroes of television and the movies and wish we could be like them. Instead of yielding to the source of misery in our unwillingness to be present in the present, we turn away and look for solutions that promise a quick fix. We see our bulges, feel our aches, experience our misery, and try to fix them by surgery, chemicals, herbs, weekend workshops, or the latest fitness fad. In not allowing presence we try willfully to manipulate and change our form according to some external standard. Unfortunately, when we willfully manipulate our conflicted selves from an already conflicted orientation, we only succeed in creating yet another level of conflict.

After some advanced Rolfing, David expressed his experience of transformation with a wonderful image. He said, "You know, at

first I thought Roling was somehow changing me into a different person. But I soon realized that Roling was allowing me to become more fully myself. Before Roling I was like a jack-in-the-box with the lid closed tight. When I got Rolfed, out I popped.”

As I have said throughout this book, our struggle as human beings is with the limitations of form. Form is not just a mere shape or outline. It is the prereflectively lived way, style, and manner in which we are or become who we are. We are forming and being formed throughout our lives. Yet we tend to come to presence as a formation that manifests in the unwillingness to surrender to formation. Unfortunately, we would often rather willfully fossilize our form and live in our self-created prison, than freely allow who we are to fully come to presence.

“Surrender,” of course, does not mean “submission.” Submission is either an active or passive act of the unwilling-will. Like every act of the unwilling-will, submission remains incongruent with the situation as it is unfolding. When we submit we do what we think we must without any clarity or understanding of our situation. Submission is a form of unwilling-formation; surrender, however, is a form of allowing-formation.

In allowing-formation you remain fully present in the present, connected and appropriately relating with your situation. You understand your situation because allowing remains congruent with, participates in, and lets occur what is happening without any willful attempt to manipulate yourself or your situation, or your past, present, and future. Allowing-formation dissolves your spatial and temporal conflicts by yielding you fully present in time and space.

Unwilling-formation blames, judges, whines, collapses, takes drugs, becomes arrogant, passively withdraws, becomes rigid or dense, and so forth. In unwilling-formation we remain fixated in conflict, not fully present in the present, and willfully attempting to manipulate our own forming and being formed.

Since unwilling-formation is the source of conflict and misery, it can deal with conflict only by producing more conflict. In unwill-

ing-formation we always seek the solution to our conflict somewhere outside and external to ourselves. Unwilling-formation only creates more suffering in its unwillingness to be present in the limitations of time and space and in its unwillingness to be appropriately related.

Allowing-formation is transformation, the creative appropriation of time and space. Transformation is allowing presence. When you allow presence, you participate in what is spatially and temporally unfolding and forming. Like an inspired artist, you are abandoned to and creatively present with your work and life, living your time passing through the non-passing of time. Living toward your future from what your past has made possible, you prereflectively see, feel, and understand how things belong together in palintonic primordial relationship, and can thus choose and act appropriately. Released in limitation and living the passageless-passage, you dance light and free in the radiantly presencing fullness of spacious time.

Dr. Rolf is reported to have once said, "Without a Line you cannot respond with a sense of connectednowness." Dr. Rolf often used the concept of The Line as a kind of shorthand expression for the structural, functional, and experiential results of organizing the body in gravity. In this quote she is using the concept of The Line to refer to a profound experiential, structural, functional, and energetic opening to our bodily core.

At the deepest level of understanding, our core is allowing and the place from which we orient toward the world. Every orientation and act of will presupposes a place from which to orient, and that place is our core. When our core is in conflict and undifferentiated from our surface, we stand in conflict with ourselves and our world.

Not only is the core the place from which we orient in space, it is also our opening in time and a nonspatial dimensionality from which we orient in time. Behind us is the nonspatial dimensionality of our past and in front of us is the nonspatial dimensionality of

our future. Our core is our lived-present. From our lived-present, we orient toward our future on the basis of what our past has made possible.

Unwilling to allow what is coming in and out of formation, we willfully try to manipulate ourselves and our world. Without the allowing openness of our core, we lose a clear and sane place from which to orient and relate to our world and we live imprisoned in the limitations of time and space. Imprisoned in the limitations of unwilling-formation, we continually lose our ability to respond and relate fully and openly to the ongoing flow of events.

In the mundane space and time of the unwilling-will, we feel hemmed in and pressured by the relentless flow of objective and subjective time. Our lives seem driven by time. In the modern world we never seem find enough time for our work, our relationships, or ourselves. We rush about doing this and that, even trying to stay on schedule during our leisure time. The entire time we are being hemmed in and driven by objective time, we find ourselves again and again drawn into the melodrama of subjective time. Mesmerized by a fragrance, a thought, or music from the past, we become emotionally ensnared in the longings, hopes, fears, and miseries of subjective time.

When we are in conflict with our core, we are in conflict with our lived-present. In turn, we necessarily stand in conflict with our past and project an inappropriate future. Without an unconflicted core from which to orient in time and space, we lose our bearings, our sense of connectedness, and our ability to love and be loved.

In rigidity our core and surface are tight and defended. Since we cannot be present in our present, we are in denial of our past and projecting a false future of unlimited possibility. When our surface is soft and our core is tight, we collapse into the swoon of not wanting to be present in the present. Haunted by our past and having no present from which to orient toward the future, we await a magical salvation that never comes.

Density is a collapse down and around a tight and dense core

that attempts to slow down the passage of time in order to lessen the pain and guilt of the past and the present. Density is forever bogging down and stagnating in the present in order to simply outlast whatever is or was creating pain, difficulty, and guilt. In density we have no future because we are always bogging down around the core in the present.

The limitations of time and space, of gravity and your lived-body-form, are not boundaries and limits that keep you from being who you are. Limitation provides a clearing, a space, a time that allows you to be. Limitation allows you presence in the present. We call ourselves human beings, not human doings. Another name for being is *presence*, or, what is the same thing, allowing-presence. A human being is not simply a rational animal. A human being is a spacious body, a human allowing-presence. This space is your space. This time is your time. You are always and already this time and space for being. When you awaken your core, you dwell in the palintonic harmony of primordial relationship and breathe free in spacious time.

Your core is allowing and the place from which you orient. In allowing formation, your core is the place from which you orient and come to presence in space and form. Bursting with the choices of your past and the anticipations of your future, your core is also your lived-present.

The core of your body-self is the core of time. The core of time is the nonspatial dimensionality of your lived-present. Behind you is the nonspatial dimensionality of your past which functions as the lived-basis for your future. In front of you is the nonspatial dimensionality of your future which functions as the lived-possibility toward which you are always heading. Your core is your lived-present from which you orient through time. Your core is your lived-present from which you orient toward your lived-future on the basis of your lived-past. When your body approaches functional economy and integration in gravity, your core opens and you may get a sense of your spacious body. When you find your core,

you begin to become present in the present. Allowing presence in the present, you are at once grounded, uplifted, centered in the core-surface integration, and moving with unencumbered ease. Allowing presence in the present, you are resting spaciously and intensely awake in form and at ease as the passageless-passage. Allowing presence is allowing the palintonic harmony of primordial relationship.

From no point of view and completely without will, we are only just this allowing presence, this ultimate yielding of space, time and the whole being of forming and being formed which sees itself as yielding presence.

Creatively awake and eternally present, never identical to and never apart from what is forming and being formed in spacious time, *it* is always just now falling and contracting in on itself and leaping expansively out of itself in spacious time. Embracing itself in unobstructed fullness, yielding returns eternity and sameness bespeaks itself simply in difference.

Living your core, breathing round, and full of presence, you are the passageless-passage. You dwell in spacious time.

Silently, with superluminal speed, the whole universe softly falls transparently open. With no barriers anywhere, everything here is a mirror for everything now. Like a fragrant spring breeze that is so subtle you almost have to stop breathing to smell it, the spacious heart of whole-being-yielding-presence gives this mirror-play that I am, too. Leaping out of itself and falling back in on itself, creating and forming itself always anew from within its own destruction, breathing in now, breathing out now, there is no self at all, only this breathing, this round dance and mirror-play, this expanding and contracting now: each one yielding to every other one, giving space, being time, touching and being touched, soft and tender, all together whole and present now.

In this synchronistically orchestrated, grand simultaneity and confluence of whole-being-spacious-time, this very present embraces and is embraced by past and future. Your every mood and shift in

orientation is reflected everywhere and in everything, and everywhere and everything is reflected in you: in the changing weather and seasons; in a flower bending in the wind; a palm tree burning with unspeakable joy in the desert heat; a pine tree being breathed by the cold, pale illumination of the moon; dust quivering in a beam of light; the gathering of clouds on the horizon; the cawing of a crow perched on the roof; a cat quivering, intensely alive and fixated on a movement in the grass; a stone, self-secluding and oblivious of the need to go to church; tears in a friend's eyes; the tilt of a stranger's head.

Silently, presence sings on the wings of reflection's disruption. Dance free in whole-being-spacious-time, for you are this very presence in the present, this whole-being-yielding-presence falling in on itself and bursting radiantly awake out of itself. You are this spacious body.

Glossary

Alchemy

Traditionally and throughout the world, alchemy is the art of creation or transformation. It is not merely a process of change. The alchemists are not simply interested in adding or subtracting elements to and from each other to produce another kind of substance. Alchemy is not chemistry, but the art of transforming and purifying what is in conflict and confusion so that it can exist at a higher, more evolved level of order, harmony, and potency. In this sense, Zen meditation, *qi gong*, and Rolfing, for example, are forms of alchemy.

In point of fact, alchemy has been practiced in three often overlapping forms. Metallurgic alchemy is the practice of trying to transform base metals into gold. The metallurgic alchemists believed that all the base metals were slowly evolving into the perfected state of gold and that they could speed up this natural transformation. Many alchemists, including Paracelsus, were healers and practiced plant alchemy. Plant alchemy is the practice of trying to potentize or greatly increase the healing properties of herbs through alchemical transformation. Plant alchemy was probably the precursor to homeopathy. Philosophical alchemy is both the theory and practice of the spiritual transformation of the whole person, body and all. These three branches are not often clearly distinguished. Even a cursory glance at the history of alchemy shows that all three branches more often than not degenerated into the most wildly extravagant nonsense ever written. The word “gibberish,” for example, is derived

from the name of a particularly opaque eighth-century Arabian alchemist, Abu Musa Jabir, who was often called Gerber.

Alchemy as a philosophical or spiritual discipline is the only branch discussed in this book. Philosophical alchemy is important because it is perhaps the only system in Western philosophical thought, prior to the twentieth century, that recognized and tried to speak to how spiritual transformation is always bodily transformation. The alchemists called the spiritual transformation of the body “metasomatosiis.”

Allowing

Allowing is distinguished throughout this book from willing. Human consciousness in Western thought is generally and mistakenly thought to be grounded in the will. Since allowing is not a form of active willing, it is most often misunderstood as a form of passivity. But activity and passivity are both forms of willing. To take action is an act of will; to remain passive is also an act of will. In contrast and prior to activity and passivity, allowing is a way of being, not a way of doing. At one point or another, the processes of meditation, creativity, and transformation all become forms of allowing. In allowing, we prereflectively participate in what is happening without interfering with or separating from what is happening. In allowing we let what is happening occur in a completely free and unconflicted way. Appropriate action or willing can arise only from the unconflicted seeing and clarity of allowing. Allowing is the site at which being is revealed. Heidegger calls this site the Logos.

Allowing can also be characterized as the event of appropriate relationship, unconditional love, or *agape*. Traditionally in Western philosophy and theology, however, God is thought to manifest through acts of will. People often say, for example, “Let God’s will be done.” This attribution of will and consciousness to the spacious groundless-ground of existence is a projection of the human body-self. But prior to the human world with all its conflicts and

misconceptions, allowing is not a form of consciousness and it is not apart from consciousness. Allowing is completely and simply the spacious clarity of *this*. Allowing is not something we do, undertake, or will. In our depths it is simply what we always and already are. Ultimately the arising and falling of the totality of what *is* is completely without will.

Allowing-Will

The realization of the allowing-will is the realization of integrated, unconflicted, free action. Freedom, creativity, and transformation cannot happen without the will, but they do not arise from the will. The will is required both to undertake and carry out any creative or transformative project. But until human performance and action are grounded in the spacious heart of allowing, they are not truly creative or free. In human life, allowing is not complete until it comes to fruition in appropriate action, or willing.

Anxiety

In common speech, anxiety is never properly distinguished from fear. But anxiety and fear are really quite different. Fear is an emotion and as such it is a form of intentionality. Fear is always the fear *of* something. In fear we are always oriented toward a specific object, person, or situation. Anxiety is never an orientation toward a specific object, person, or situation. Rather, the panic feelings of anxiety seem to come from everywhere. Anxiety is essentially the threat of nonbeing or nothingness. Anxiety is experienced as a threat to one of the most fundamental structures of the human self and its ways of being in the world, namely, intentionality. Unlike emotion, anxiety is not really a form of intentionality or orientation at all. Anxiety is disorientation, the threat of the dissolution of oriented space, a threat of the loss of one's very space to be. Thus, whereas fear is experienced as a surface emotion, anxiety is experienced as a threat to the very core of our being.

Core/Surface

The core/surface distinction has a number of levels or overlapping meanings. Consider first some objective versions of this distinction. According to Dr. Rolf, one way to draw the distinction is to understand the intrinsic myofascial structures as core structures and the extrinsic myofascial structures as surface structures. Her original attempts to draw this distinction were driven by the recognition that a balanced and integrated body functioned more efficiently. One of her favorite indicators of this economy of function was the appearance of the spine (core) moving in free independence from the pelvic and shoulder girdles (surface). In an attempt to grasp the experiential level of this independence of the spine from the girdles, she also said that an integrated body was one in which our doing (surface) did not interfere with our being (core).

Another way to objectify the core and surface is to understand it as the space bounded by the pelvis, abdominal myofasciae, rib cage, and jaw. This internal space extends from the pelvic floor to the palate or nasopharnax. The bony and myofascial structures that surround the core space constitute the surface, or “sleeve” as Dr. Rolf called it. Functional objectifications of the core and surface also exist. What Rolfers experience and observe as free unencumbered movement can be understood according to Dr. Rolf’s suggestions as the integration of the intrinsic and extrinsic musculature. What Rolfers observe and experience as the core/surface integration can also be measured as significant and long-lasting parasympathetic arousal. For those who are sensitive to energetic phenomenon, the appearance of core/surface integration displays an unmistakable presence.

Subjectively, the core can be experienced at one level as a somewhat unbounded, expansive openness and sense of weightlessness that runs through the center of the body from the top of the head, down in front of the spine, down through the center of the legs, and emerging slightly in front of the heels on the soles of the feet. The surface of the body is experienced as the outer dimensions of

the body that surrounds without being separate from the core. In a integrated and balanced body, the outer body seems to float freely and fluidly around the sense of lift through the core. In such an integrated experience of core and surface, you feel uplifted, fluid in all your movements, open, and free, as well as profoundly grounded on the earth.

Psychologically, the core is our innermost sense of identity and self. The surface is our presentation to and interaction with our world. The psychological core can be called our true self and our psychological surface can be called our ego-self.

Deeper yet than the objective, subjective, and psychological definitions of core and surface are the phenomenological characterizations of the prereflectively experienced core and surface. The core of a human being is allowing; the surface is the will. As I previously stated, Dr. Rolf attempted to articulate this level of understanding by saying that the core was our “being” and the sleeve was our “doing.” The core is the place from which we orient toward the world and the surface is the orientation. The core is also our lived-present, from which we orient toward our future on the basis of our past. As human body-selves we continually mobilize ourselves in various ways to orient toward the world. This mobilization to orient is the surface, and is an act of will. Since the core is the place from which all mobilization to orient proceeds, the core can never mobilize itself towards anything at all. The surface is always some kind of doing and the core is always just being (i.e. *be-ing* or *is-ing*).

The core “faces” in two directions at once: toward the human world and toward the ultimate groundless-ground of existence. The core is both self and no-self. The core is the site at which being is revealed. Ultimately the core is the event of primordial relationship which is neither will nor consciousness and which allows forth the totality of what *is* in space and time.

Creative appropriation

All truly creative activity arises from allowing. To creatively appropriate means: 1) to allow what is happening to occur; 2) to own what is occurring as yourself; and 3) to act appropriately and in accordance with what is truly occurring. Creative appropriation is thus an activity of the allowing-will.

Creative performance

Creative performance refers to the experience of any creative or transformative activity. Creative performance is the experience of any inspired action, and is perhaps best exemplified in the inspired performance of a piece of music. Science, art, and meditation, for example, all partake of the experience of creative performance. But the differences in the goals of each discipline is what distinguishes them from one another. The goal of creative science, for example, is the propositional statement of the solution to a scientific problem. The essential goal of art is not problem-solving but the manifestation of the freedom of creative performance as a work of art. Meditation is the realization and manifestation of the freedom and transformation of the whole person, body and all. Creative performance is thus the integration of allowing and willing into one unified activity called the allowing-will.

Emotion

Emotions should be distinguished from pains, feelings, and moods. All emotions involve feelings but not all feelings are emotions. A mood like boredom, for example, is a feeling but not an emotion. The word "feeling" is not always used to describe an emotion. When we say, "I feel good today," or "I feel pain," or "I feel (i.e. intuit) that something is wrong," or "I feel bored," we are not describing emotions.

Emotions are forms of intentionality. When we are angry, sad, or afraid, we are always angry, sad, or afraid *about* or *of* something. When we have pain, we are not pained *about* something. Pains

have causes. But, strictly speaking, emotions are not in any simple way caused. There are many physiological, neurological, and chemical processes that correlate with our emotions, but they are not the causes of emotions. Emotions are a prereflective form of intentionality. They are somatic ways of coming to presence, orienting, understanding, and dealing purposively with our world. Fear is not wanting to be present; anger is the protection of presence; sadness is the loss of presence; and joy is the exuberance of being present.

Fascia

Fascia is a form of connective tissue that surrounds and penetrates every structure of the body. It consists of a colloidal ground substance and collagen fibers. The collagen fibers are laid down in the ground substance and give fascia its strength. Proteins from the ground substance of fascia are connected to the cytoplasm inside the cell. Through fascia everything in the body is both unified and differentiated. Fascia is largely responsible for the unique form and structure that each body is. The unity of the fascia and the muscles is called the myofascial system.

Dr. Rolf called fascia the “organ” of structure. When our bodies lose architectural integrity through sickness, emotional difficulties, continual poor posture, or physical trauma, fascia shortens and thickens to immobilize an injured area while it heals; it also shores us up against the downward drag of gravity.

Form

Normally when we think of the concept of “form” we think of outline, shape, and contour. Our concept of form must of course include these ideas. But form is really much more. It is the unique way, style, or manner in which a thing or person is or becomes what it or he/she is. Every form has a boundary. To have boundaries is to have limits. To be is to be a form, and to be a form is to be limited. Limitation is, therefore, the condition of form. Remove all limitations and boundaries from your body-self-form and you would cease to be.

Our human form can either be in conflict with itself or free of conflict. When our form is in conflict, we experience the limits of our form as the place at which we stop being. This experience of conflict and dis-ease is at the heart of dualism and those theories and practices that understand the body as standing in opposition to self, mind, or soul. When we are not in conflict with our form, limitation provides the place from which we begin being who we are. The limitations of form, therefore, are not opposed to freedom. Limitation is actually one of the enabling conditions of human freedom.

Freedom

Freedom is the creative appropriation of limitation.

Intentionality

Intentionality is one of the most important and fundamental concepts of phenomenology. It describes a fundamental structure of our being. The intentional structure of our being is always some form of a *directing-itself-toward*. Consciousness, for example, is always the consciousness *of* something. Consciousness (the act of awareness) and the object of consciousness arise together. Consciousness is never merely acted upon passively by the world, but is continually mobilizing and orienting itself toward the world. Intentionality is both a reflective and prereflective orientation.

Traditionally, phenomenology has understood intentionality only as the orientation toward the world. In the terminology used in this book, this understanding of intentionality reduces it to the surface. But an orientation toward something requires a place (core) from which the orientation proceeds. Accordingly, intentionality is broadened in this book to include the core. Intentionality is thus a core/surface phenomenon.

Through the pioneering work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger, most phenomenologists recognize that intentionality is an orientation of the lived-body. But even Merleau-Ponty never grasped the core dimension of intentionality. Thus,

intentionality is a form of oriented space that involves a core and a surface.

Koan

A koan (*kung-an* in Chinese Buddhism) is a question or teaching device found in certain schools of Zen Buddhism. A koan is not a mantra, but is a very particular and profound kind of question designed to allow the Zen student to penetrate his or her bodily, emotional, mental, and spiritual blocks in order to open more fully to the ultimate ground (which is no ground at all) of existence.

Koans are commonly misunderstood by Buddhist scholars as paradoxes designed to short-circuit the intellect. But such a view is misleading. Answering a koan requires both a fundamental shift at every level of our being and everything we are to answer it—including our intellect. True, the intellect alone is never adequate for answering a koan. But this admission does not mean that Zen opposes the intellect. Without the intellect you would not be able to answer a koan. A koan is like a mirror in which we can catch a glimpse of or realize completely a spaciously radiant presence (sometimes called “God” or “Buddhanature”) that is greater than our human body-self and is yet never apart from us. The answer to a koan is the transformation of the person attempting to answer it.

A verbal answer is not appropriate for most koans. Some examples of koans are: “How do you realize your true nature (God, Buddhanature) while gazing at a cactus?” or “What was your original face before your parents were born?” or “What is the sound of one hand clapping?”

There are three kinds of understanding involved in answering a koan: 1) *experiential understanding*—realizing one’s true nature, or “original face”; 2) *manifested understanding*—being able to manifest, completely and without conflict, experiential understanding as one’s whole being, body and all; and 3) *conceptual understanding*—being able to philosophically articulate the integration of manifested and experiential understanding. Answering a koan ulti-

mately demands all three forms of understanding. First one must realize experiential understanding and then be able to manifest experiential understanding completely, freely, and without hindrance as one's entire being. The conceptual understanding of the answer completes, integrates, and is the final step in fully grasping the answer. Sometimes all three forms of understanding occur at once. Most of the time, however, conceptual understanding occurs after the marriage of experiential understanding and manifested understanding—sometimes minutes, sometimes days, or sometimes years later. Koan study in Zen requires of the practitioner the ability to reflectively conceptualize the integration of experiential and manifested understanding and the integration of allowing and willing in the context of everyday life.

Limitation

Limitation is the condition of form. Every form (a cloud, a dream, a wish, a body, a box, a form of energy, etc.) has boundaries. Boundaries are the limitations that allow a form to be the unique form it is. To be is to be a form, and to be a form is to be limited. Remove all limitations from a form and it would simply cease to be. Remove all limitations from human life and it would simply cease to exist. A universe without limitation would be no universe at all. Some examples of limitation discussed in this book are the human body-self, fascia, gravity, time, and space.

Human life does not take place apart from limitation. Limitation is the condition of (that which makes possible) human life. Limitation need not limit us completely. If freedom is the creative appropriation of limitation, then limitation enables human freedom. In limiting some aspect of our life, a limitation also provides a possibility. What is possible is always tempered and conditioned by limitation. For a human being there is never unlimited possibility or impossible limitation. The possible is always made possible by limitation.

The Line

The concept of The Line comes from Dr. Ida P. Rolf. At one level of understanding, The Line is the line of gravity. It is not an anatomical concept or structure. Imagine cutting a body into a number of cross-sections. Each cross-section has a center of gravity. If the centers of gravity all lined up along a straight line, the body would be integrated and organized around the line of gravity. The extent to which the weight centers of the body do not line up along the line of gravity is the extent to which the body is not integrated in gravity. Using The Line in this sense to evaluate integration in gravity is quite limited, and just one of a number of indicators of structural integration used by Rolfers.

Lived-experience

The concept of “lived-experience” (in German, *Erlebnis*) comes from phenomenology. In this book, lived-experience refers to pre-reflective experience. As we live through experience, we do not reflect on it. For example, at the moment you are overwhelmed by the beauty of a flower, you are not thinking about it. You join with and participate in the beauty of the flower. In Zen terms, you realize your true nature as a flower. Later when you talk about or think about your experience, you step out of the flow of your lived-through experience. You separate yourself from lived-experience and reflect on it. When we separate ourselves from lived-experience the world falls into a dualism of a subject who reflects and an object that is reflected upon. Lived-experience is prereflective, i.e., preobjective and presubjective. It is the ground of reflective experience. It is how we come to presence before any subjective or objective considerations appear. Thus, the concepts of “lived-space,” “lived-time,” and “lived-body” refer to our prereflective living-through of space, time, and body. This living-through is neither subjective nor objective.

Metasomatosi (see **Alchemy**)

The spiritual transformation of the body.

Myofascia (see **Fascia**)

The unity of muscles and fasciae is called the myofascial system.

Palintonos

The Greek word *palintonos* was used by the great pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus (c. 500 BCE) in the following aphorism: "They do not apprehend how in differing with itself it is brought to agree with itself: palintonic harmony, like that of the bow and the lyre." "Palintonos" literally means "stretched back and forth." It means, therefore, the unity of opposition.

I appropriated "palintonos" to describe the structural and functional integration of the human body-self in relation to the environment. This notion of integration is the goal of Rolfing. Dr. Rolf often compared the body to tensile structures like a tent or a suspension bridge. She pointed out that it is not the poles that maintain the tent in gravity; rather, the way the fabric and the guy-wires are appropriately stretched across the poles is responsible for the tent's integrity. In this respect, she said that the body was more like a tent or suspension bridge than a stack of blocks. At one level of analysis, palintonic harmony describes the unity of opposition of tensile structures like tents and human bodies.

Attempting to articulate the principles of Rolfing along with a number of other faculty members at the Rolf Institute, I realized that one of our fundamental principles of manipulation and movement education should be called the Palintonic Principle. Palintonic harmony describes the unity of opposition between back-and-front, inside-and-outside, side-to-side, and up-and-down balance. It also describes the somatic geometry of order which is so apparent in a Rolfed body. And it describes the unity of opposition among structures of the body as we move through space.

Palintonic harmony is a useful concept because it also describes the objective, subjective, and prereflective unity of opposition for our human being in relation to the whole. "Palintonos" expresses many of the meanings which attracted Dr. Rolf to the German

word *Spannung*, which can mean “span,” the relaxed but vital sense of energy we experience during intense moments of creative or meditative activities, the integrative experience of body-mind harmony, etc. But over and above these meanings, palintonic harmony is also meant to describe unity of opposition that constitutes the harmony of the whole of what *is*.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a twentieth-century philosophical movement founded by Edmund Husserl. The two most important philosophers who critically expanded and evolved phenomenology are Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Phenomenology was never meant to be a set of doctrines, but rather a philosophical method for describing and/or interpreting experience. There are almost as many versions of what this method is as there are phenomenologists. Phenomenology as it appears in this book is most akin to the work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.

It is my contention in this book that phenomenology as true philosophy demands that the one who engages in phenomenology is transformed, body and all, by the very practice of phenomenology. Otherwise, phenomenology simply degenerates into another ungrounded academic intellectualism.

The first step in phenomenology is to allow (prereflectively, freely, without conflict, and without imposing any inappropriate conceptual frameworks on experience) what is happening just as it is occurring in its proper contextual nexus of relationship. The next step is to describe what is happening in language that is fully appropriate to what is unfolding (see the three forms of understanding discussed under **Koan**). Phenomenology, thus, becomes the philosophical activity of the allowing-will. Since phenomenology requires of its practitioners unconflicted experience grounded in allowing, it is necessarily a transformational practice.

Possibility (see **Limitation**)

Human freedom and action takes place in the tension between limitation and possibility. As long as we are alive there can never be unlimited possibility or impossible limitation. Limitation and possibility arise together. Once we realize how to actualize the possible, limitation is no longer experienced as that which limits us, but as that which makes our freedom possible. Freedom is the creative appropriation of limitation. Freedom cannot happen without the will, but it does not arise from the will. Freedom arises from allowing, and allowing comes to completion and fruition in appropriate action (willing). When limitation is creatively appropriated, possibility is actualized.

Presence

Presence is another word for being. Unfortunately, when we use the English word "being" it brings to mind the idea of a static unchanging entity. We can come closer to an understanding of the word "being" if we render it as "be-ing." Another way to grasp this point is to understand be-ing as *is-ing*. Heidegger says that the fundamental question of metaphysics is, "What is the nature and meaning of being?" Another way to ask this question is, "What is the being of beings?" Heidegger partly answers the question "What is being?" by saying, "The being of beings is not a being." Stated still another way, the question asks, "What is the is-ing of what is?" or "What is the presencing of what presences?"

When we ask the question, "What is a human being?" we are really asking how it is that we come to presence as human. We do not come to presence as human outside the limitations of space-time, gravity, and our bodies. Our bodies are not things that we inhabit. Our bodies are who we are and the condition of inhabiting things. All our conflicts as human beings take place as conflicts in our ways of being present. Our conflicts manifest as conflicted spatializations and temporalizations of our body-self. When we come to presence freely and completely without conflict we realize

that be-ing is allowing-presence and that human be-ing is human allowing-presence. The allowing of presence is the presence of allowing.

Prereflective/Reflective

The prereflective/reflective distinction comes from the phenomenological movement. In our culture, we typically assume that whatever is not objective is necessarily subjective. Since prereflective experience is not objective we mistakenly tend to comprehend it as subjective. But the subjective and the objective are the two poles of reflective experience. They arise together and at once when we move from prereflection to reflection. Thus, prereflection is the logically and ontologically prior ground of reflection. In reflection we step out of prereflective experience and reflect on or think about ourselves and our world. As we separate ourselves from lived-experience in reflection, the participatory understanding of prereflection falls apart into the subjective and the objective.

Consider these examples: Suppose you are completely engrossed in a game of basketball, or in the midst of the inspired performance of a piece of music, or lost in the beauty of a flower, or frightened by a loud noise. In each of these experiences you are orienting prereflectively. You are not thinking about what you are doing. You are conscious and aware, but there is no sense of separation between what is happening and your mode of being. You are participating with what is unfolding. There are no thoughts such as, "I should either pass the ball or shoot!" or "Boy, I'm really playing this music well!" or "This flower is really beautiful!" or "God, that slamming door is really frightening me." In each experience there is just unification with what is happening. Later in reflection, when you separate from lived-experience and move out from prereflection, you think about what happened. Your descriptions take place in the past tense and usually the word "I" or "me" shows up in your descriptions.

The word "object" means "that which is thrown before" and the

word “subject” means “that which is thrown under.” In reflection we become a subject contemplating an object. We find ourselves no longer participating with what is unfolding, but rather separate from and thinking about our experience. We find ourselves “thrown under” the dominion of a object which is “thrown before” us. Prereflective experience, therefore, is both presubjective and preobjective.

The prereflective/reflective distinction is a philosophical distinction. It is not, therefore, the same as the psychological distinction between the unconscious and conscious. The prereflective is not the unconscious mind and the reflective is not the conscious mind. The psychological distinction is more narrowly conceived than the philosophical. The unconscious is that aspect of our pre-reflective experience that we, either through self-deception or lack of interpretive skill, misinterpret to ourselves and others in reflection. Self-deception is a willful reflective misinterpretation of pre-reflective experience that we convince ourselves to be true over time. Like repression, self-deception is made possible and held in place by our defended, fixated body-selves. Self-deception and repression show up in our bodies as distortions and strain patterns in the myofascial network. Myofasciae responds to unresolved psychological and emotional stress in characteristic patterns. It can either shorten and thicken or become loose and undifferentiated.

A conflicted and fixated way of living always manifests as conflicted prereflective and reflective experience. Transforming a conflicted orientation into an unconflicted orientation cannot be accomplished by reflectively understanding theories of transformation or by following a step by step protocol for transformation. Likewise, transformation cannot happen by attempting to spend more time being prereflective. Transformation requires a fundamental reorientation of the whole person from the ground up, inside and outside, prereflectively and reflectively, intellectually and emotionally. When prereflection rests in the spaciousness of allowing, transformation begins and our conflicted, fixated prereflective *and* reflective psychospacial and psychotemporal orientations begin to dissolve.

Psychospatial

The Western view of the body is rooted in metaphysical dualism, the notion that the body and mind are utterly separate and distinct things. Plato said that the mind is to the body as the pilot is to the ship. Descartes, in his attempt to lay the foundations for science, added to this conception the notion that the body and all living things were nothing but soft machines. In Descartes' system, the physical and material world was defined as that which takes up objective, measurable space. Descartes argued that since the mind does not take up measurable space, it is neither spatial nor material.

Most of the Western world now accepts without question this narrowly-defined view of space and the body. Even though the human body, for certain purposes, can be viewed as a soft machine that takes up measurable space, it is much more. It is not so easy to define what this "much more" is, however. The extent to which we allow ourselves to be swayed uncritically the Platonic/Cartesian view of our bodily being is the extent to which we will fail to understand what and who we are.

The spatiality of the body is fundamentally neither subjective nor objective; it is, rather, lived-space. Prior to the subjective and objective experience of our bodies is the lived-body and lived-space. At the level of the prereflective lived-space of the lived-body, we do not experience the self as other than the body. The human self cannot be separated from the lived space of the body; the human self *is* the lived-space of the body. The human self is oriented space. Another way to make this point is to say that the human self is a psychospatial orientation. This psychospatial orientation is the intentionality of the lived-body-self.

Psychotemporal

Not only are we a psychospatial orientation, we are also a psychotemporal orientation. Time, like space, can be understood objectively, subjectively, and prereflectively. Objective time is the time we keep track of by means of clocks and calendars. Subjective time

is constituted by the thoughts, images, and feelings we have about our experience of time. Prereflective time is lived-time. We are not just in time, we are also of time. We exist as temporal beings orienting from our lived-present toward our lived-future on the basis of our lived-past. Our mental and emotional conflicts not only show up as conflicts in how we organize and orient spatially, they simultaneously show up as conflicts in how we live our past, present, and future.

Satori

Satori is a Japanese word often used interchangeably with enlightenment or the Sanskrit word *nirvana*. Like another Japanese word, *kensho*, satori means prereflectively seeing our true nature empty and free of the conflicts of self and will. It is the realization that our true nature, the being of our human being, is the spacious groundless-ground of existence. Zen Buddhists would agree with Meister Eckhart's realization that "the eye by which I see God is the same eye by which God sees me." Satori is not the realization that "I am God." It is the realization that everything, including myself, arises and falls back into the same spacious heart of allowing. God, or Buddhanature is not any kind of being or energy or form of consciousness. No one person or being is identical to God or Buddhanature, and God (Buddhanature) is not separate from or other than each being and every person.

There are many levels of enlightenment recognized by Buddhism. With the dissolution of the ego-self comes the realization of the true self or the core self. The realization of the true self brings with it a sense of unity with God or Buddhanature. This realization of the true self is a kind of satori. With the complete dissolution of the true self comes yet another level of satori. The self that is manifested after the complete dissolution of the ego-self and the true-self is a free unencumbered self that can be created or dropped depending on the requirements of the situation. It is a body-self that stands on a different ground than the self before

enlightenment. Complete enlightenment is living in the world with other people: living as a spacious body-self simultaneously together with and separate from Buddhanature in compassionate service to and for the well-being and transformation of others.

Transformation

Transformation and change are not the same. In order to produce a change, a technique or technology is required. A technique is based on a methodology put into play by the calculating human self and will. Transformation, however, demands the dissolution of this calculating self and will and the rebirth of a new self and will. This death and resurrection takes place as allowing.

The word “transformation” is made up of two words, “trans” and “form.” “Form” does not just mean outline, shape, or contour. More fundamentally it means the way, style, or manner in a person becomes or is who she or he truly and freely is. “Trans” indicates taking up a special relation to form.

Our own transformation cannot be undertaken by means of any willful attempt to change our situation. It must be grounded in allowing ourselves to become fully present as who and what we are free of our conflicts and fixations. Transformation is the process of taking what stands in conflict and fixation and allowing it to become most fully what it is. “Transformation” means, therefore, “allowing-formation,” i.e., allowing the way in which we become who and what we completely, freely, and truly are.

Unwilling-Will

The unwilling-will is at the heart of the untransformed body-self. In its recoil from transformation, the unwilling-will orients itself spatially and temporally toward the world in conflict and fixation. The unwilling-will is not yet a true and completely free will because in its recoil from transformation, it is unwilling to allow. Our actions are free only to the extent that they are grounded in and flow from allowing. The integrated action of the allowing-will is freedom.

The unintegrated action of the unwilling-will is unfreedom. The unwilling-will is a willful will.

The unwilling-will can take three forms: willful passivity, willful activity, and the passivity of letting go of all willing.

Willful passivity is a withdrawal from what is happening. Chronic unresolved fear which stems from childhood abuse often shows up in adults as willful passivity. In fear we do not want to be present. In chronic unresolved fear, we orient toward our world as a bodily presence that does not want to be present. We will not to will and create a body-form that wants to be formless. The passivity of letting go of willing is a defense often employed by willfully passive people. It consists of daydreaming, sleeping, or fainting in the face of difficulties and life-crises. Daydreaming, sleeping, and fainting are neither acts of will nor acts of allowing.

Willful activity attempts to take charge, control, dominate, and willfully manipulate what is happening in order to avoid facing loss of self, anger, exhaustion, depression, or anxiety.

The active/passive distinction is not the same as the willing/allowing distinction. Activity and passivity are both forms of willing.

Will

The human will and self are created together as two aspects of a unitary phenomenon. With the will we move and reach out beyond ourselves to the world in order to accomplish our goals. Self and will arise together in decision and action. Throughout our lives we meet and discover who we are in our decisions and actions as we invest ourselves in the world. Without the will we could not realize our freedom. Without the will we could not undertake or complete any creative project or transformation. But freedom arises in allowing and comes to completion in appropriate willing and action.

Zazen

The art of Zen-style sitting meditation.

Zen

Zen is a form of Buddhism. The word *zen* is derived from the Sanskrit word *dhyana*, which means “meditation,” “concentration.” When Indian Buddhism moved into China, “dhyana” was pronounced by the Chinese as *ch’anna* and later shortened to *ch’an*. When Ch’an Buddhism was introduced to Japan, the word “ch’an” was pronounced by the Japanese as *zen’na* and shortened to *zen*.

Zen, like most forms of Buddhism, is grounded in the practice of meditation. It is common to think of meditation as a kind of technique. Practitioners of Zen are taught to sit cross-legged, to breathe a certain way, to hold one’s hands in a certain way, to keep one’s eyes open, and so on.

Even though Zen practice involves certain techniques and disciplines, ultimately Zen is not a meditative technique at all. A technique is a method employed by the self and will to achieve a certain end. But meditation is not a means to an end and it is not a self-driven activity. Essentially, meditation is a realization or waking-up to the spacious heart of existence. In fact, the Sanskrit root-syllable *buddh* in the word Buddha means “to wake up.” In the end, there can be no waking-up to the spacious heart of existence unless the self that willfully attempts to extricate itself from its conflict and misery dissolves. When the self dissolves, it dissolves in pre-reflective allowing. When it is resurrected, the self lives from a new spacious heart free of old conflicts.

Just as we can will ourselves to paint a painting, for example, we can will ourselves to sit in meditation. But just as we cannot will ourselves to be inspired while painting, neither can we will ourselves into the awakening of Zen while meditating. Zen begins the moment we realize we cannot find our way to freedom through any self-driven technique, maneuver, or act of will. Only through an act of surrendering self and will does it become possible to realize that who and what we ultimately are is grounded in a spacious allowing that is greater than our body-self and yet is none other than our body-self.

Zen is not the practice of denying the human body-self and world in order to find the unnameable source of existence (variously called God, Buddhanature, the Tao, etc.). It is the heartfelt practice of embracing the totality of what is and finding that all of this is none other than Buddhanature, or God. Buddhanature is not identical to any one kind of being. It is not energy, mind, consciousness, or any kind of creator being. Nor is it identical to the collection of all the kinds of beings that make up the totality of what is. At the same time, Buddhanature is neither separate from nor other than each and every kind of being. The allowing of Zen meditation reveals that the secular is the sacred, that the everyday world is the spiritual world, and that our own body is "the body of the Buddha." The dualities of human life are seen through with the realization that we are, at one and the same time, both separate from and part of the spacious groundless-ground of existence.

Zen is the practical philosophy that allows this wisdom to become our everyday life. Zen is the philosophical practice of living our life as the allowing-will.

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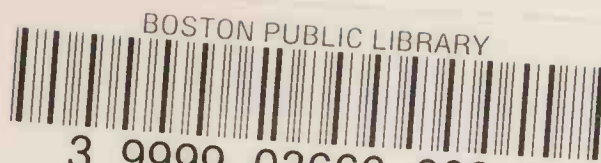
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Spacious Body
Explorations in Somatic Ontology

In *Spacious Body*, Jeffrey Maitland brings his knowledge and personal experience of Buddhism, phenomenology, alchemy, psychoanalysis, and the bodywork system of Rolfing to bear in forging concepts adequate to an understanding of embodied experience.

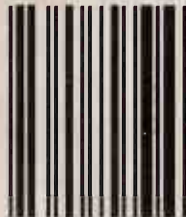
To write of the nature of being, of bodily experience, is difficult. The abstractions of being, temporal, and spatial presence draw language out of its daily context and often leave us longing for specifics. But if we stay with it, Maitland's patient language eventually leads us deeper into our own experience and toward our own orientation in the world—which is the only place worth going.

—from the Preface by Michael Salveson

Certified Advanced Rolfer and Instructor Jeffrey Maitland is one of four Advanced Rolfing Instructors in the world, and is Faculty Chairman and Director of Academic Affairs for the International Rolf Institute. Dr. Maitland was a professor of philosophy at Purdue University for thirteen years, and was certified to practice Rolfing in 1979. He has published numerous articles on Rolfing, the theory of somatic manual therapy, and philosophy in various professional journals. Dr. Maitland maintains a private practice in Scottsdale, Arizona.



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